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July 2005

System Of A Down's John Dolmayan

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MD's Readers Poll Results!

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Mudvayne's **Matt McDonough**

19 Crazy Patterns by
Mike Portnoy

Jazz Great **Billy Hart**

Steve Vai's **Jeremy Colson**

Pink Floyd's **Nick Mason**

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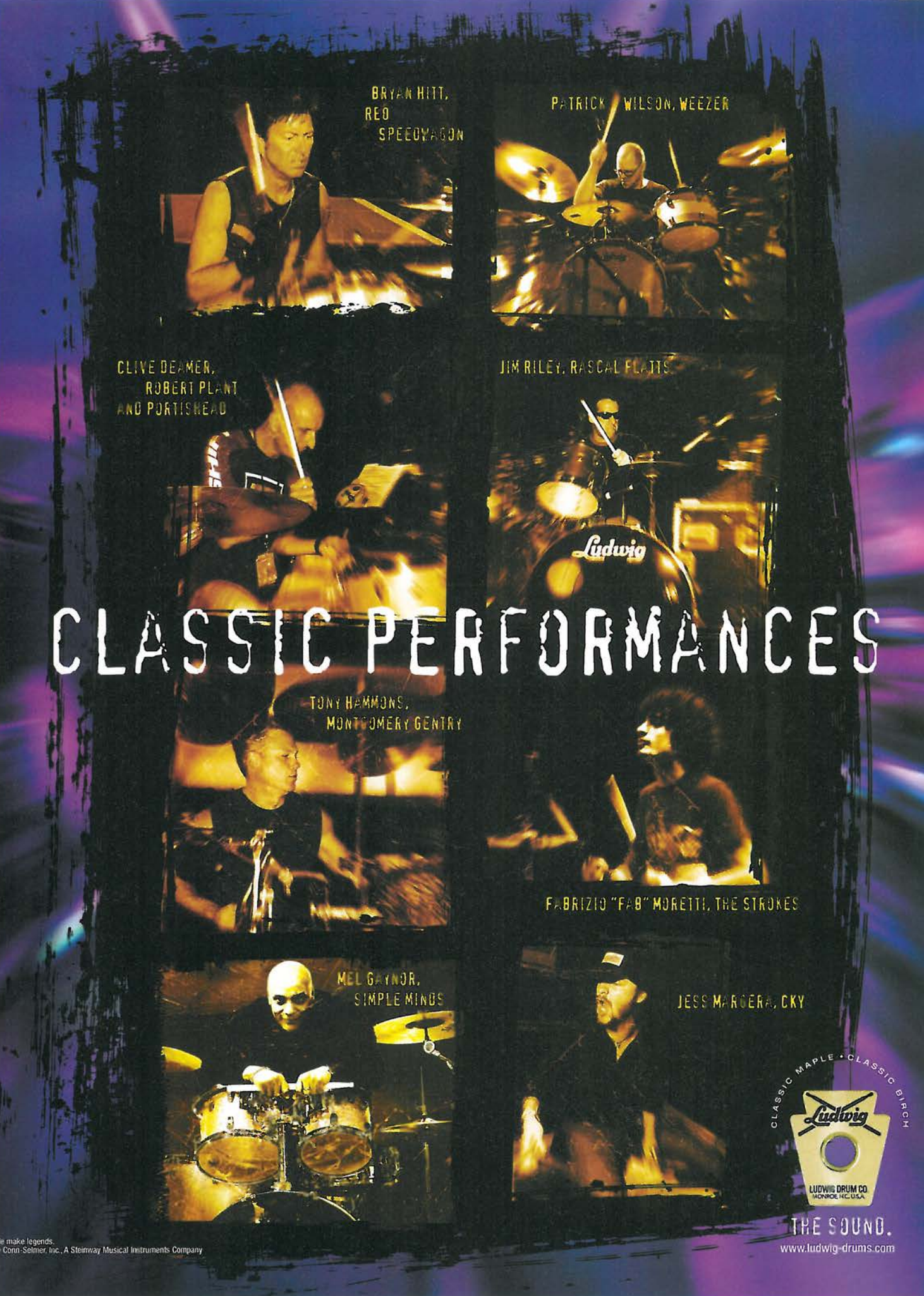
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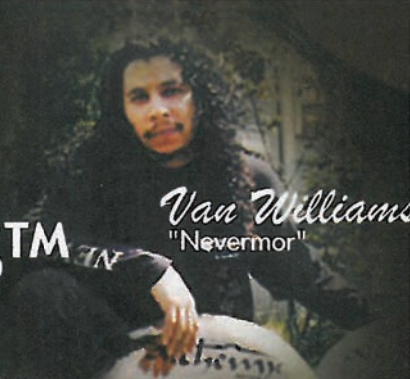

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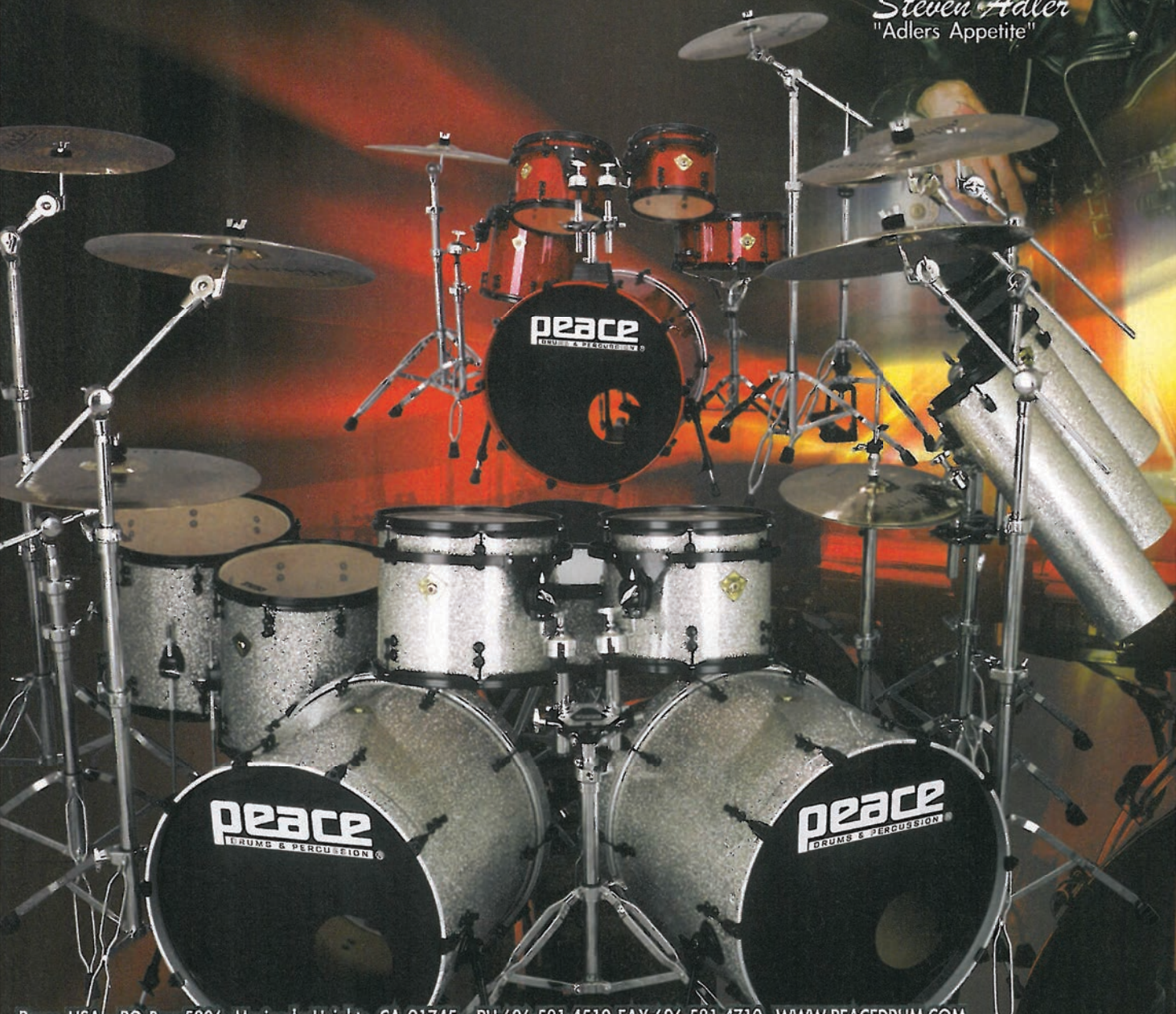

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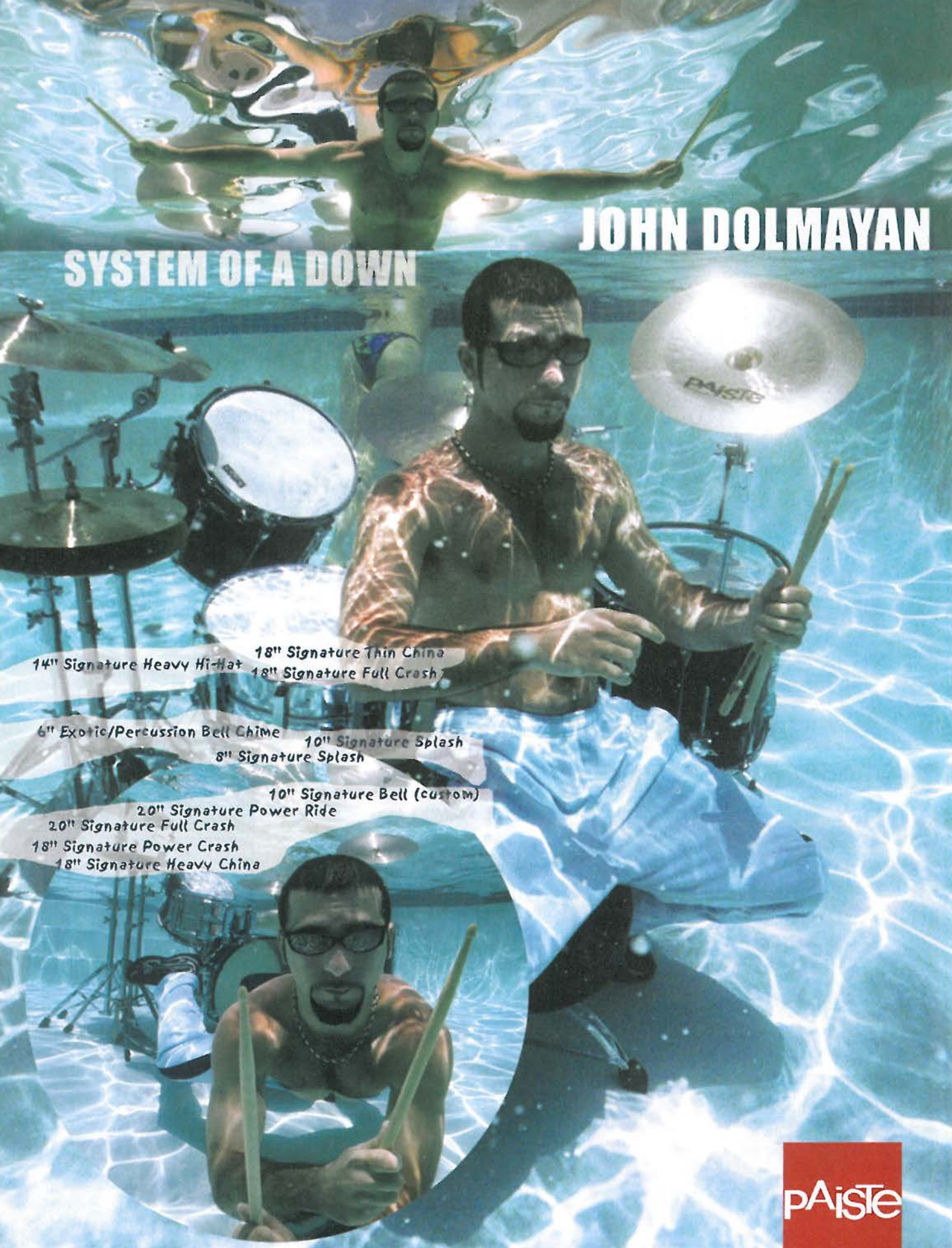

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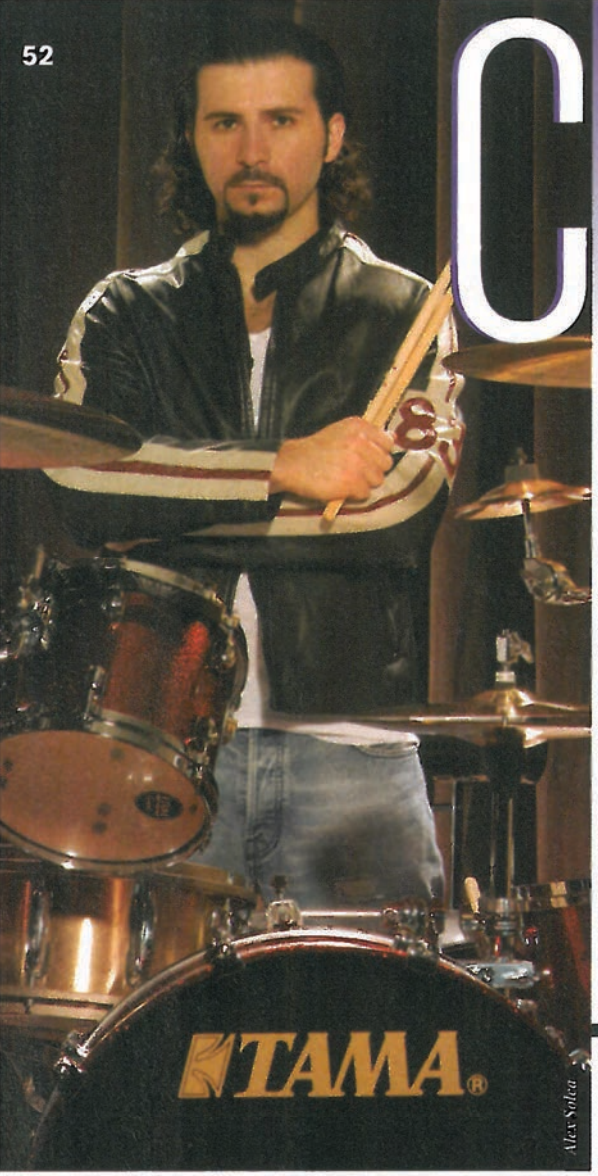

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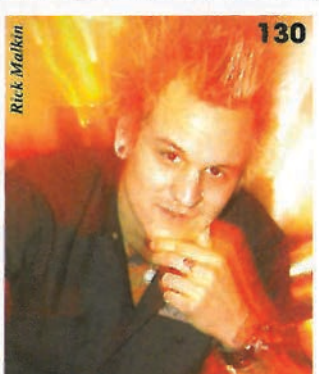

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6/7/05 7:00 pm Clinician TBA
West LA Music, Los Angeles, Ca

6/9/05 6:30 pm Will Kennedy
Skip's Music, Sacramento, Ca

6/20/05 7:00 pm Horacio Hernandez & Marc Quiñones
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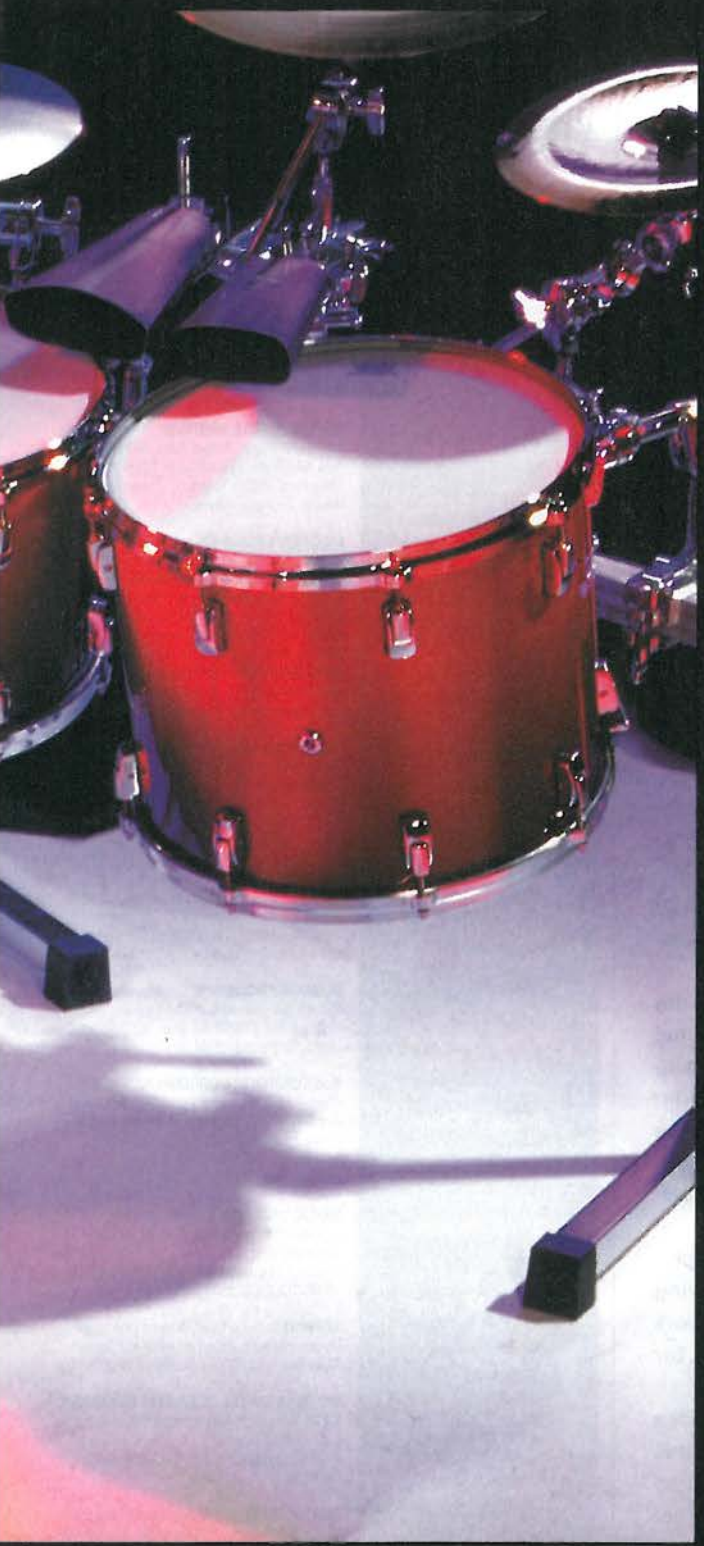

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Cascio Interstate Music, Milwaukee, Wi

6/28/05 7:00 pm Clinician TBA
The Drum Pad, Palantine, Il

Get A Grip!

Is traditional grip a dying art? I've been wondering about this lately. Sure, you still see players using it—primarily older cats (including many of the heavyweights) and drummers in corps. But how many *drumset* players coming up today are learning it?

I'm asking this now because the editors here at *MD* are in the process of viewing hundreds of tapes sent in for our Undiscovered Drummer contest. (By the way, the winners will be announced next month.) Frankly, we've seen *very* few traditional-grip players. In fact, of the one hundred or so tapes I've watched personally, only two drummers used it.

When I started drumming back in the late '60s, "serious" drummers used traditional grip. The prevailing attitude was that matched was for guys who couldn't play. That changed in the '70s, when drummers like Billy Cobham gave matched grip a lot more credibility. But back then there always seemed to be a healthy debate about which grip was superior. I don't hear that debate anymore.

Before you start thinking that I'm trying to "sell" traditional grip, let me briefly run down my history. When I was coming up, I learned traditional grip and used it for five years. Then, in my mid-teens, I switched to matched. At that time I was studying legit percussion with teachers who felt that matched grip was best because it translated well from one instrument to another (drumset, timpani, mallets, etc.). I've spent the last twenty-five years focused on matched grip, even going so far as to develop the ability to play ride rhythms with either hand.

Then about a year ago, I began working with an organ trio in which I play a lot of brushes. Here's the twist: I've never felt comfortable playing brushes with matched grip. So now I'm using matched grip for stick work (mostly with left-hand lead) and traditional grip (right-hand lead) for brushes. (Yikes!)

With all of the traditional grip brush playing I've been doing, the idea to try playing that way with sticks seemed obvious. Well, the effect this has had on my playing has been interesting. Even though my left-hand chops are rusty, I'm digging the sound (lighter, more varied), and somehow the groove feels different, maybe even funkier. The point is, I'm really enjoying revisiting this "old way" of playing.

With all this in mind, *MD* will soon be presenting an in-depth article on stick grips, where we'll be talking to various experts on the subject. That said, I'd love to hear *your* thoughts about the grip you prefer and why. Please feel free to contact me at billm@moderndrummer.com.

In the meantime, I'm off to the shed to work on my left hand!

Bill Miller

MODERN DRUMMER

Volume 29 Number 7

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Paul Motian

Two times within three issues is too much. First you put Matt Sorum on the cover of your February issue, and ran jazz great Ben Riley as an inside story. Now you put Tommy Lee on the cover of April, and run the legendary Paul Motian inside. At least Paul got a tiny photo on the cover. But it was buried under Tommy Lee's headline.

Matt and Tommy are fine rock drummers. But neither has achieved what I'd consider "legendary" status. Meanwhile, you seem to be relegating jazz greats who might legitimately lay claim to the "legend" moniker to the inside of your magazine. These aren't relics from the past. They're active, creative drummers who are still building on already impressive bodies of work. How about giving them their due? **Tommy Asten**

Bill Rieflin And Breathing

I thoroughly enjoyed Jon Wurster's interview with R.E.M.'s Bill Rieflin in your April Issue. In the story, Bill touched on one of the most basic subjects of them all: breathing. To breathe deeply and intently is to truly utilize our bodies' natural design.

When newborn babies breathe, their bellies contract and expand effortlessly. Contrast that to adults: Everyday tension and stress has made us forget how to breathe effectively. Our breathing is shallow. We mainly utilize our chest muscles, while keeping our face and neck muscles relatively tight. Apply this to a live performance, where we're called upon to flail about with passion (and sometimes to sing) for an hour or more, and it's no wonder that we're exhausted and dripping with sweat within the first fifteen minutes.

To breathe from the belly, to let it fill us and feed our drumming naturally without our conscious intervention, is, in Bill Rieflin's words, "a monumental feat." **Ludwig Zebrauskas**

Tommy Lee

It's great to see Tommy Lee back on the drumming scene, and back on the cover of *MD*. Forget about all the tabloid-fodder exploits that went on in the past. One fact is undeniable: Tommy was one of the most influential drummers of the '80s, and his flamboyant and innovative style set a standard for a generation of rock drummers to follow. I'm looking forward to seeing and hearing where he takes drumming in the new century! **Frank Balatino**

I won't debate Tommy Lee's drumming abilities. I know he generated a lot of interest in drumming among young players during Mötley Crüe's heyday. But he's also had a whole lot of negative influence, due to his jail time, his marital misadventures, and his unabashedly raunchy image. (His photo on page 44 of your April issue doesn't say "reformed" to me.) No amount of musical talent justifies putting such an individual on the cover of a respected magazine like *Modern Drummer*. **William Macpherson**

Thanks From Ken

Paul La Raia

Thanks for putting my interview in the February issue of *Modern Drummer*. Mike Haid did a great job on the story, and your staff did a great job putting it together in the magazine.

Just for the record, there were two small errors in my setup description. It's not much of a concern, but my rack tom is a 12" diameter (not 10"), and my hi-hat stand is a Tama Iron Cobra Lever Glide.

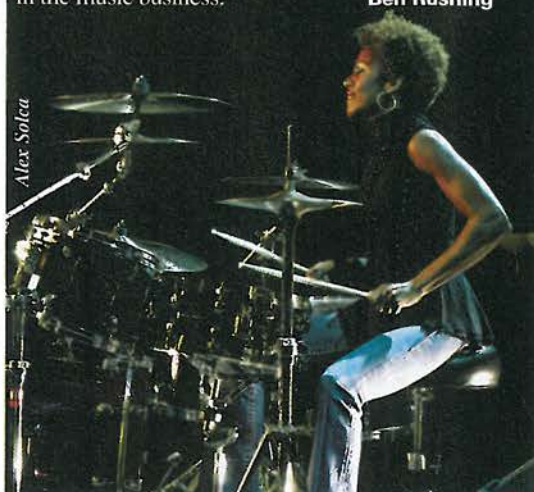
Take care, and keep up the great work for us drummers around the world. **Ken Schalk, Candiria**

Shauney Baby

Thank you for Robyn Flans' April interview With Shauney Baby. It's refreshing to read an in-depth article on a successful female drummer. Shauney deserves your recognition of how talented and dedicated she is.

I'm a working female drummer who grew up in the South in the 1970s and '80s. Female drummers are much more readily accepted today than we were then. Even so, it's still a challenge to be taken seriously in a male-dominated field such as drumming. Your interview with Shauney gives me hope that one day *I* could be the subject of an article in *Modern Drummer*. **Kat Almlie**

I'm a male professional drummer. I took my young daughter to see Hilary Duff at the Dodge Theater in Phoenix last year. I was extremely impressed with Hilary's drummer, though I didn't know who she was or anything about her. Now I know that it was Shauney Baby, and after reading your article I respect her even more. She is intelligent and articulate, and her successful career shows that skill, perseverance, and preparedness can overcome a multitude of obstacles in the music business. **Ben Rushing**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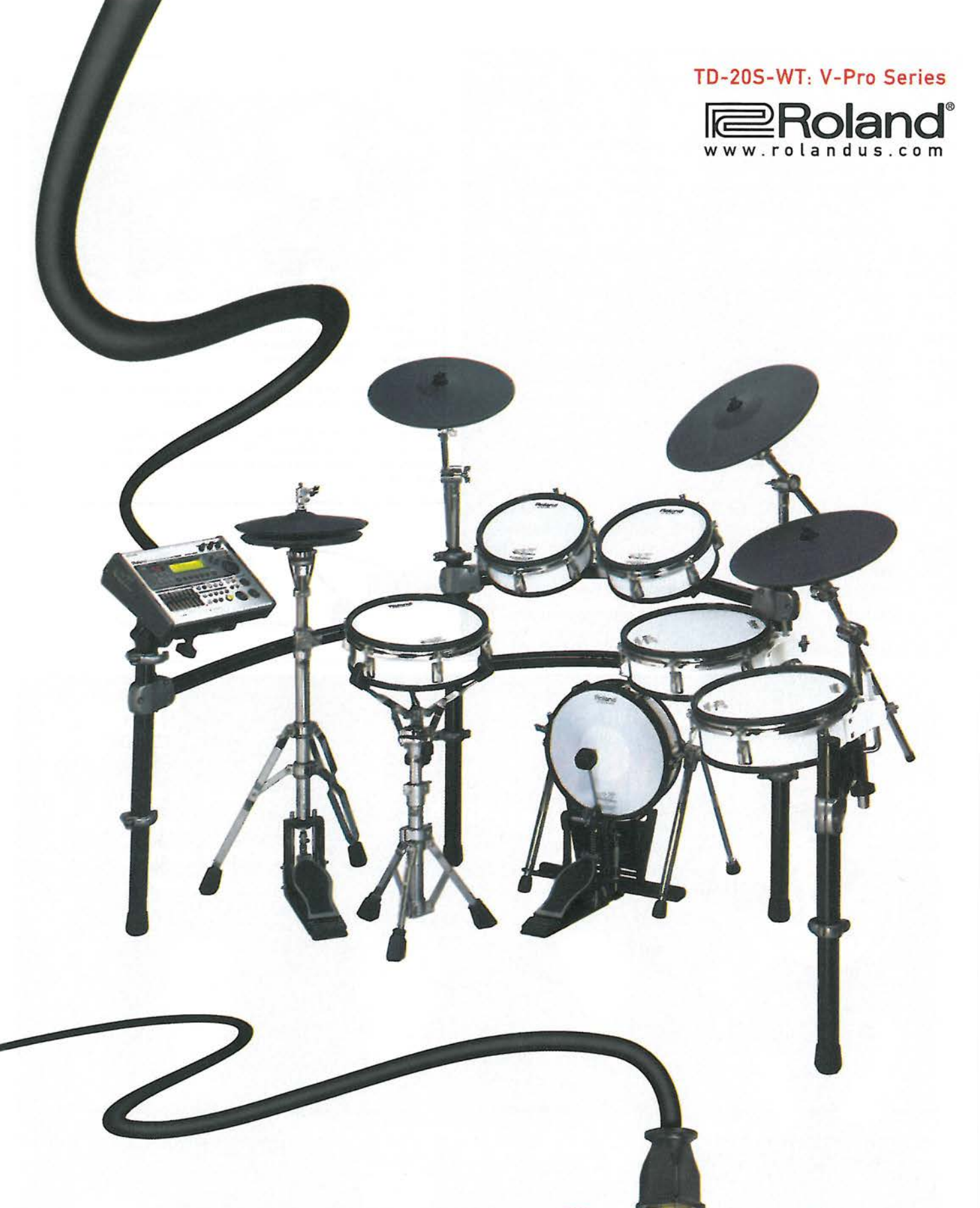

EXPRESSION

A Youthful Louie

I wish I could write my December '04 Louie Bellson article all over again—or at least the intro. When I wrote that story, I hadn't seen Louie play in eons. But tonight I had that opportunity...and I was blown away! So I decided I had to write that new intro anyway.

At the age of eighty, Louie is fairly frail, so I really wasn't sure what his performance would be like. The finesse, the time, and the feel were not a surprise, but the power and steadiness was. Louie's performance was no different from one that I saw twenty years ago. In fact, when he was behind the drums, there was *nothing* frail about him. My daughter commented that the grin he wore as he played made him look like a little kid, and I thought, How incredible to do something for so many years and still exude a child-like love and enthusiasm for it.

And then my son nailed it when he said he couldn't believe how the slight, soft-spoken man that he had met before the show literally burst out when behind the kit. Louie *was* a kid again, and the passion he still has for his drums after seventy years of playing—along with the skill he developed in those seven decades—was awe-inspiring. To see and hear it moved me to tears.

I only wish there had been more young people in the audience to feel this pure joy. I encourage all *MD* readers to see Louie Bellson play if the chance comes your way. You'll carry the memory with you for the rest of your life. When we left, I said to my fourteen-year-old twins, "I hope you know that you were in the presence of greatness." They said they did.

Robyn Flans

Dropped Beat

The *MD* Festival ad that appeared on pages 146 and 147 of the June issue incorrectly listed Sabian as a sponsor for Alex Acuña. Alex is now, and has been throughout his career, a Zildjian artist. Zildjian will be his cymbal sponsor at the Festival. We apologize for the error.

Our April issue contained photos of Scott Abels that were incorrectly credited to Alexis Henry. The photo credit should have read: Hadas.

The *Update News* section of the May issue incorrectly indicated that Tony Adams was recording with producer Russ Titelman for Jared Tyler's CD, as well as performing with Bill Sims. Tony Mason is the drummer who was doing that recording and performing.

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Patchwork Snare Drum

I picked up an unusual snare drum a while back, and I've since exhausted every "knowledge base" that I know of in an attempt to find out more about it. It has a card on the inside indicating that it was made by a Clarence Williams of Chicago, Illinois. It has two sets of snare wires—one in the usual spot, and one underneath the top head—each with its own control. The brass hoops on the drum were something I put on while experimenting with it. It originally came with triple-flanged chrome hoops. Help! **Skip Cunefare**

This was a challenge for our crack historian, Harry Cangany. He replies, "Clarence Williams built drums in the repair department of Franks Drums in Chicago. Today this is a common practice, but back when your drum was made, custom snares were almost unheard of. Your drum looks to be an amalgamation of many parts. The hoops are WFL or early Ludwig, polished down to the brass. The drum has a 1970s Slingerland TDR strainer and bridge (butt). A Premier cast arm is being used to control the internal parallel mechanism.

"The shell is not spun, but instead is rolled brass, with a seam. It looks thin and is probably Asian in origin. (That's the interesting part, to me.) The lugs are probably vintage tube models, and the shell was not drilled for other lugs before the tube lugs were installed. I wonder if it was made initially for a timbale, or was commercially available to Maurie Lishon, the owner of Franks Drum Shop when Clarence worked there. I notice that one lug is slightly crooked. That reminds me of things I have done on drums. I don't see a vent hole, which is strange for a snare drum.

"Unfortunately, there is no established market for drums like yours. In a world of so many choices from so many factories, a 'no-name' drum has limited appeal."

Paiste 400 Cymbals

I have a 22" Paiste 400 series ride cymbal. I've been trying to get information about the 400 series for more than five years. What can you tell me about the quality, sound, and price of these cymbals?

Juan Pablo Faúndez Raddatz

Paiste's Andrew Shreve responds, "The 400 and 400 Color Sound series were entry-level cymbals manufactured in our German factory between 1986 and 1992. The 400 Color Sounds were available in red and black finishes. Regular and Color Sound cymbals were offered in the following models and sizes: 12" splash, 14" crash, 16" Power crash, 16" and 18" China Type, 18" crash/ride, 20" Power ride, 22" ride, and 14" hi-hats. Sound Edge 14" hi-hats were available in the regular finish."

Wiring A Speaker As A Kick Drum Mic'

In your recent March issue, you had an article on home drum recording by Chris Vrenna, which was awesome. I found the idea of using a speaker as a kick drum mic' especially cool. But I'm not exactly an electrician, so could you give me directions on how to wire the speaker so that I can plug it into a mixer? **Erik Lund**

Chris Vrenna replies, "All you have to do to wire up a speaker as a microphone is to cut the 'female' end off of a mic' cable, solder the positive wire to one of the metal leads on the speaker, and solder the negative wire to the other lead. That's it! There will also be a neutral wire inside the mic' cable, which in this application is not used. So you can either cut it away or solder it with the negative wire. It doesn't really make a difference. Have fun!"

QUESTIONS FOR MD'S DRUM EXPERTS?

Send them to It's Questionable, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, or rvh@moderndrummer.com. Please include your full name with your question.

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5. JOHN BLACKWELL (Prince)

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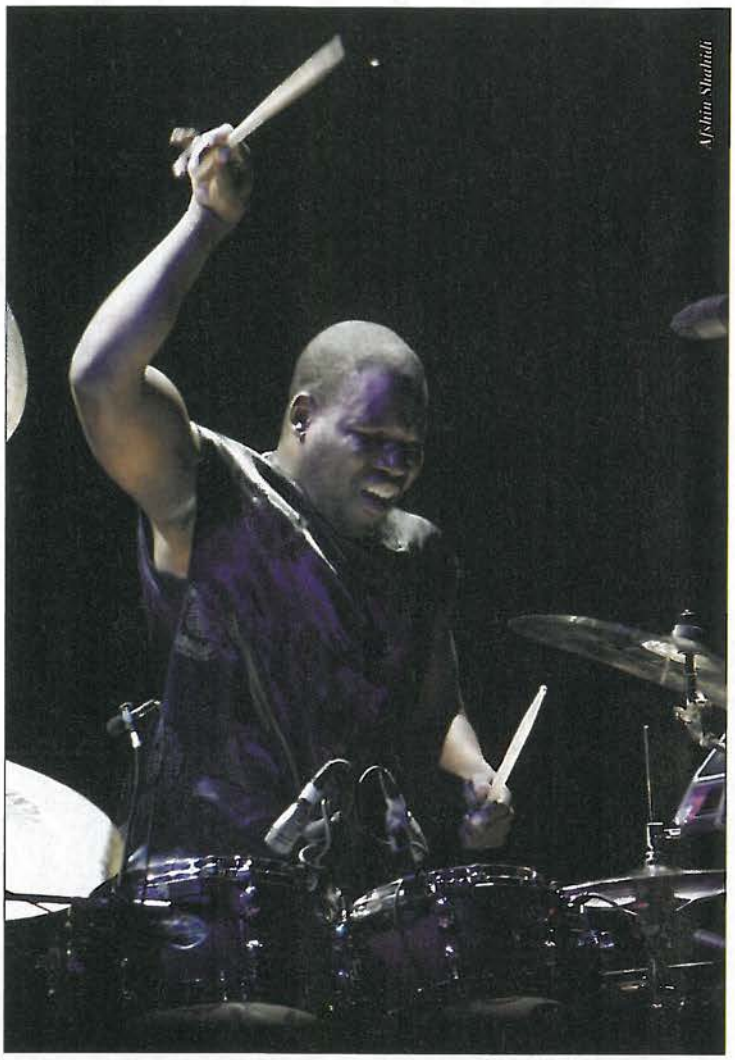
Pedal-Tension Advice From John Blackwell



Q I've been using Tama Iron Cobra pedals for the past three years, and I'm still trying to figure out my comfort zone with them. What should I look for when I'm adjusting my tension spring? What is the difference in performance between the levels of tension? (That is, loose versus medium versus tight.) How does each tension work for you, considering the way you do double bass patterns on a single pedal?

If it helps you out, I want my pedal to feel fast when I do my fast stuff, but not have too much springy rebound to it when I remove my foot from the board. **Justin Griffin**

A As far as pedal tension goes, I feel that it's all about what's comfortable for you. I like my pedal to be tensioned as tight as possible, so that the action feels very stiff—almost to where it's impossible to pull off a single beat. I like it this way because it helps me build up my leg muscles. (And also, simply because I like a challenge.)

I recommend that you start by only *practicing* with your pedal as tight as possible. When you're doing a gig, bring your pedal to a comfortable (loose or medium) tension. I'm willing to bet that eventually you'll want to practice *and* play with your pedal tensioned as tight as you can get it. If you do, that will help you adjust to any pedal, whether tensioned loose, medium, or tight. And you'll be able to pull off all kinds of fast patterns on *any* pedal.

Pedal control and foot strength don't come overnight. You have to put in some hours working your leg and your foot. Good luck, and God bless you.

Goldfinger's Darrin Pfeiffer On Achieving Tom Sounds

Q I'm amazed at the sound of your drums—especially the toms. What is your drum setup? I think you're using Pearl's Session series, but as every drummer knows, that's not the full story on achieving the end sound. Could you please talk about sizes, tuning, and head selection for the toms, and anything else involved with achieving your unique sound? **Garren**

A Thanks for your interest in my drumming and drum sounds. You're right, I do use Pearl Session Select drums. I fit the toms with clear Remo Emperors at a medium tuning. We used Sennheiser 421s and Shure 98s on the toms, and reissue AKG c12VRs as overheads. Room mic's are a big part of my tom sound. About 10-20% is room, to give it that "big" sound. For comp/EQ we used the Focusrite D2 and D3 plug in (Pro Tools).

Keep in mind that each studio session is different because of different drummers' technique, different room sounds, and different mic's. So trying to get my exact sound will be hard. But I do wish you good luck!

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Road Tips From Russ McKinnon

Q I recently had the privilege of listening to you play live behind Barry Manilow. Most people know Barry for pop power ballads like "Mandy," "Weekend In New England," and "I Write The Songs." Many drummers may think that drumming to such songs is a simplistic task, without realizing how much patience and maturity it takes to groove to slower songs. I was impressed by your tastefulness and groove while performing these songs. Conversely, it was nice to hear your chops displayed in the dynamic, up-tempo "Bandstand Boogie."

I have two questions. First: I noticed two laptop computers hooked to your setup. How are you using these in your playing, and what purpose do they serve? Second: I know that performing the same show every night can be emotionally taxing. It's difficult to maintain the necessary passion and energy level show after show. Given this situation, how do you deal with the physical and emotional challenges of touring with such a high-profile artist? **Mark O'Brien**

A I'm glad you enjoyed the show, and I thank you for your kind words. Yes, it takes patience to play those great power ballads. I just want the songs to speak for themselves, so I do my best to present them each night with the passion and energy they deserve. I just wish that I had written a couple of them myself!

Regarding the computers: I have two Apple G4 iBook laptops (one of which is simply a backup) on a Gibraltar rack workstation. Each is installed with Digital Performer 4 software by Mark Of The Unicorn. This digital audio program lets us augment small sections of the live performance with recorded audio such as drum loops, additional background vocals, and other sound effects. I start, stop, edit, and advance the computer to keep up with the songs Barry chooses to perform each night. I play to a click track in my in-ear monitors to keep in sync with the "tracks." The digital audio is converted to sound by being sent through Mark Of The Unicorn's model 828 music interface.

Some big touring acts hide the fact that they are performing with backing tracks—especially when those tracks are a large part of what you hear in the show. But Barry fully discloses it and even makes it part of his show. During our concert, less than a third of the songs have any digital audio at all. And on those songs that do, only about 5% of what you hear might be coming from the computer.

To answer your second question: Over the years I've developed a system that helps keep me mentally sharp and physically fit (sounds like a Boy Scout motto) so I can play my best. That routine doesn't change much whether I'm playing a session, at a small jazz club, or at Madison Square Garden with a high-profile artist like Barry. I really just try to eat well, exercise every day, and get plenty of sleep. And I try to stay focused so I don't get too distracted by the craziness on the road.

It's not too hard to keep my energy level up when I'm working with Barry. We've got a great band, his show allows me to play many fun styles of music, and he himself delivers 110% every night. I'm just trying to keep up with him!

Repeat Bar

A Classic Quote From MD's Past

"I made up my mind that I would take what I love about traditional jazz and add to it. I went from being someone who had a rep as a tasty accompanist to someone who people thought couldn't play a bar of straight time!"

Avant-jazz great **Joey Baron**, July 1996

Would you like to ask your favorite drummer a question?

Send it to Ask A Pro, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Rd., Cedar Grove, NJ 07009.
Or you may email rvh@moderndrummer.com. We will do our best to pursue every inquiry.

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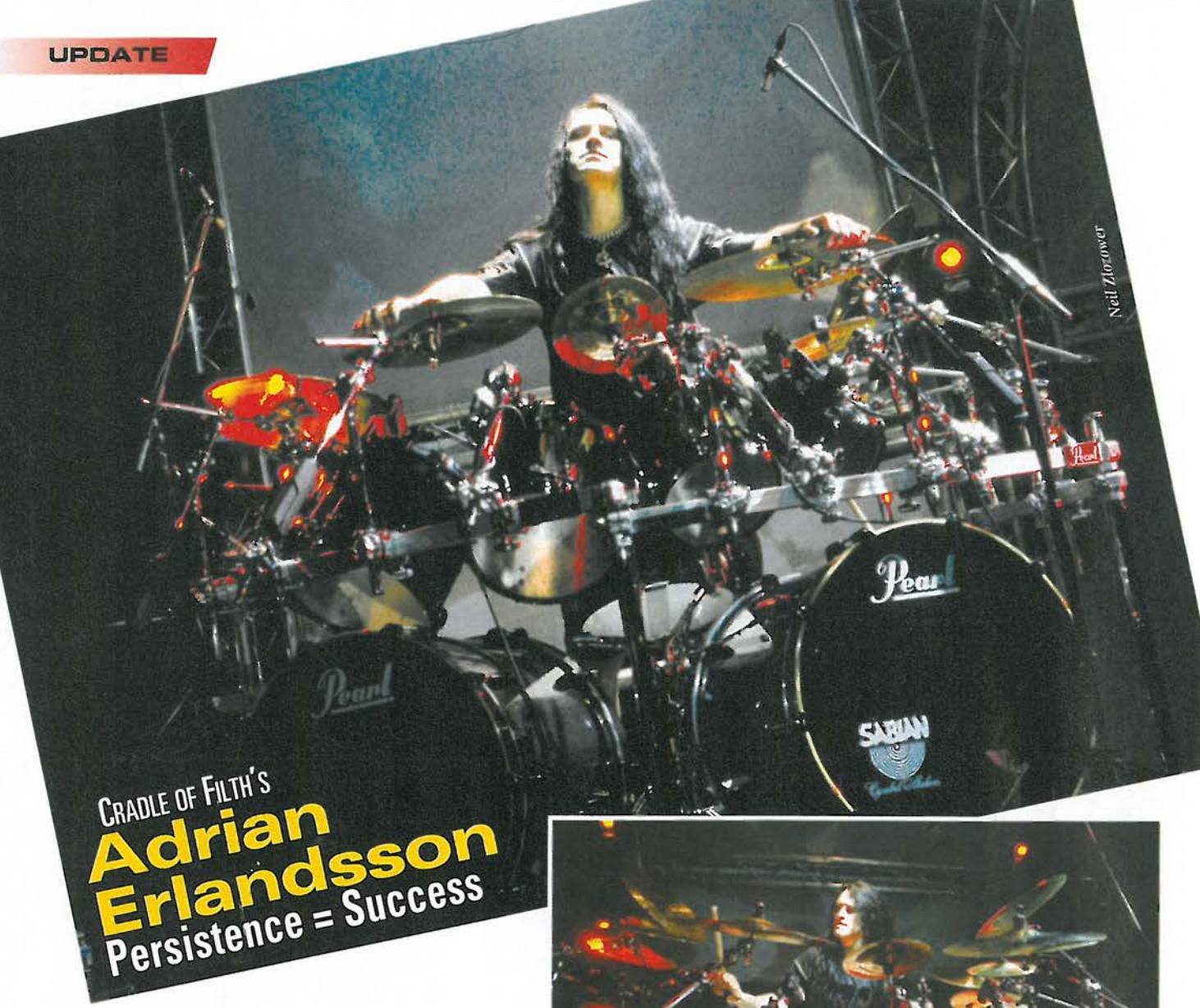


CRADLE OF FILTH'S Adrian Erlandsson

Persistence = Success

If there's any lesson to be learned from the success of Cradle Of Filth drummer Adrian Erlandsson, it's the valuable concept of persistence. Before joining the successful speed metal outfit in 1999, the Swedish-born Erlandsson worked with the bands At The Gates and The Haunted. But those gigs didn't pay the bills. In fact, back then, Erlandsson found himself toiling at day jobs just to make ends meet. It almost caused him to throw in the towel.

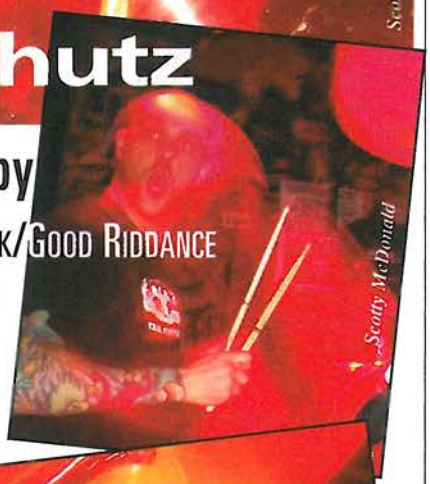
"Those days were really difficult," Erlandsson admits, "and I nearly gave up on trying to make a living out of music. But fortunately I stuck with it and have built it up to where I am today. It's a position that I don't take for granted at all. I'm dedicated to maintaining it."

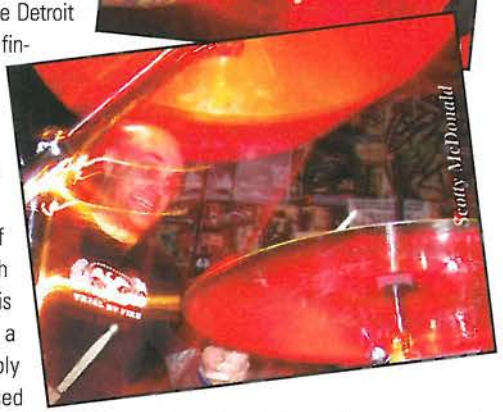
The evidence of such dedication can be heard on Cradle Of Filth's latest release, *Nymphetamine*, which finds the drummer skillfully burning his way through an impressive assortment of cuts. Of course, such rapid precision doesn't come without a dose of perfectionism. "I'm very particular about playing the take as well as I possibly can, so that we don't have to do any computer editing," says Erlandsson.

"When we recorded the latest album," the drummer continues, "I did all of the tracking with the whole band playing together at the same time. I think that really added to the live feel of the tracks. I also found it very inspiring to hear everything played at once, and it actually caused me to come up with some new parts that I hadn't thought of in the rehearsal room."

Even with such fresh inspiration, Erlandsson notes that metal drumming can sometimes be more competitive than artistic, especially for those seeking to break into the scene. "There seems to be a race between drummers to have the most advanced chops and to be the fastest," he says. "That can be really good for building your technique, but at the same time can prove really stressful if you're not up to the standards. I've learned to stop worrying about all of that and instead focus on myself, just trying to be better at what *I* do compared to what I've done in the past. That outlook has made me less stressed about my playing and more able to set realistic goals for my playing."

Waleed Rashidi





Hardcore...And Happy

Paint It Black/None More Black/Good Riddance

Nothing says hardcore quite like fourteen songs that clock in at just over twenty-one minutes. And that's exactly the kind of hustle—and muscle—drummer David Wagenschutz injects into Paint It Black's latest, *Paradise*. Still, the Detroit native isn't racing his bandmates to the finish line across the entire disc. Instead, Wagenschutz carefully balances his double-kicked inferno with more traditional, half-timed hardcore punk breakdowns.

Of course, with well over a decade of touring and recording experience, such blazing set technique and fierce energy is standard procedure for Wagenschutz, a Detroit native who got his start simply because a budding New Jersey–based band called Lifetime needed a drummer. "I decided to pack up the minivan and move out to the East Coast," Wagenschutz explains. "That was in early '92, and I was thrust into the East Coast hardcore scene at the time."

Lifetime would go on to become an underground favorite. But after a couple of albums and tours with the group, Wagenschutz moved on to other punk-based projects. Currently, he holds drumming gigs in three groups, including the aforementioned Paint It Black, plus Good Riddance and None More Black.

So what makes Wagenschutz want to perform in several acts simultaneously? "There's something about punk music and the passion and the energy within it that's so necessary for me to release from my body," he insists. "I'm just so wound up, I *need* it. So if one band doesn't get it done, then maybe I need two or three. I guess I just love to play."

Wagenschutz even slammed double duty during a European tour featuring both None More Black and Good Riddance. "That was a tall order," he says. "I played two full sets a night, but it went smoothly."

As for retaining three bands' worth of material, Wagenschutz says, "I retain no other information other than drums and songs. My wife will ask me, 'Don't you remember?' and I'm like, 'Nope, sorry.' I couldn't remember to take out the trash. But I can play the thirteenth song on the third Good Riddance record, if you need that!" Now *that's* a hardcore drummer. **Waleed Rashidi**

Journeyman Jazzer

Joe Cocuzzo

Working With Keely Smith

Singer Keely Smith, the "straight man" (woman) for the late, great Louis Prima ("Just A Gigolo") has been joined in her New York and East Coast concert and nightclub tours by much sought-after jazz drummer Joe Cocuzzo. He also recently completed work on her CD, *Keely Smith, Live At Feinstein's*, which is due for release later this year.

"I was happy to get the call to work with Keely on the East Coast," Joe says. "She wants a drummer who can cut some very difficult charts, and I was recommended." Cocuzzo has also recently recorded a trio album with vocalist Barbara Carroll and bassist Jay Leonhart called *Live At Birdland*, which will be out shortly.

For those unfamiliar with Joe Cocuzzo, he's a native of Brighton, Massachusetts. He studied with master teacher George Lawrence Stone, author of the famed book *Stick Control*, and relocated to New York City in 1958, where it didn't take him long to get work. Joe was invited to join the Woody Herman band, where he stayed for a year and a half. By 1960, he had developed a solid reputation, and ended up replacing Jake Hanna in the Marian McPartland trio at the popular jazz club The Hickory House. Cocuzzo's longest-running gig was with famed vocalist Tony Bennett, whom the drummer performed with between 1969 and 1980.

Obviously Cocuzzo has enjoyed a very successful career. Besides the artists mentioned, he's worked with such greats as Harry James, Peggy Lee, Frank Sinatra, Lena Horne, Ray McKinley And The Glenn Miller Orchestra, The Benny Goodman Band, Vic Damone, Errol Garner, Benny Golson, Zoot Sims, and Phil Woods. Joe was also the regular drummer for the late Rosemary Clooney. He also continues to work regularly with Michael Feinstein and vocalist Barbara Carroll, and appears in clubs and in concert with The Trio, featuring midi-accordionist Eddie Monteiro and guitarist Lenny Argese. **Vince Giantomasi**

NEWS

Jack DeJohnette is releasing two singular projects: a duet with Gambian Kora player Foday Musa Suso called *Music From The Hearts Of The Masters*, and a recording for relaxation and meditation titled *Music In The Key Of Om*. Those albums are being released on Jack's own label, Golden Beams, whose titles will be distributed through Kindred Rhythm Music Group. For more info on these projects, visit www.JackDeJohnette.com.

Adam Topol is on *In Between Dreams* by Jack Johnson.

Ebrace's *Out Of Nothing* features **Mike Heaton** on drums.

Peter Criss is working on a solo project.

Sonny Emory is on tour with Bette Midler. **Taku** is playing percussion.

Charley Drayton is on tour with Michelle Branch.

George Lawrence has been playing with Poco and will be doing their upcoming European tour.

Kirk Covington is on Scott Henderson's *Live!*

Sam Rodriguez is touring with Donna Summer.

Otis Brown III recently performed with The Joe Lovano Quartet at the New York Nightlife Awards, where they received an award for best jazz performance by a group. Brown recently toured with the Thelonious Monk Institute's Jazz In America program, which integrates teaching jazz history with American history. Otis has done a live recording with Ron Jackson at Cecil Brooks's new club, and he will be doing some workshop performances with Joe Lovano's nonet. Other future projects include a trip to Denmark to work with bassist Anne Mette Iversen, a tour of France and South Africa with Franck Amsaliem, and a record date with Reuben Rogers.

Ralph Humphrey has been doing a lot of playing with a variety of people, including Alan Pasqua and a group called Babaghanoush with John Pisano. He has also been touring with Natalie Cole. In addition, Humphrey has been working on material for a new book, and he continues to teach at LAMA.

Jason Singleton is on Trust Company's latest, *True Parallels*.

Congratulations to MD editor in chief Bill Miller and his wife, Sarah, on the birth of their son, Clifford Maximino.

John Ferraro has been working on a new album with Carly Simon. He also recorded the soundtrack to *The Hank Garland Story*, as well as commercials for Kia, Burger King, and Goldfish snacks. For more on John, check out www.johnferraro.net.

Brian Dunne is touring with The Average White Band to promote their latest CD and DVD, *Greatest & Latest*.

Percussionist **Danny Reyes** has created a percussion-based show called *DrumJungle*. For more info visit www.drumjungle.com.

Joe Tomino is on Dub Trio's *Exploring The Dangers Of*.

Marimba virtuoso **Dave Samuels** and drummer **Mark Walker** are on The Caribbean Jazz Project's latest, a double live CD called *Here And Now—Live In Concert*.

Ray Brinker is on *Styne & Mine* by The Christian Jacob Trio. Brinker, who worked with Ray Charles on his Grammy-winning *Genius Loves Company* CD, as well as on the soundtrack of the film bio *Ray*, also played on the new Joe Cocker CD, *Heart And Soul*. He continues to work with jazz vocalist Tierney Sutton, with whom he recorded the soundtrack to the independent film *Blue In Green*.

Bill Connors' latest, *Return*, features drummer **Kim Plainfield**.

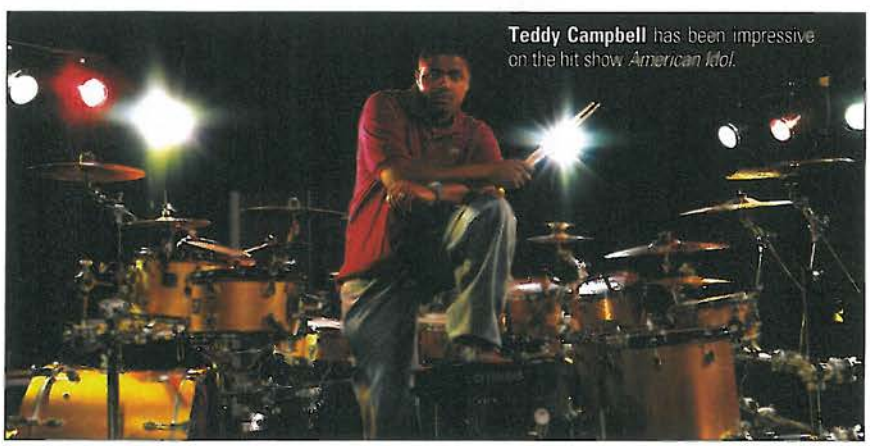
Buddahead, with **Rich Scannella** on drums, recently toured Japan. (**Ben Smith** of Heart, **Tony Fagenson** of Eve 6, and studio legend **Jim Keltner** played on the band's *Crossing The Invisible Line* album.) Check out www.buddaheadmusic.com for more on the band.

Monty Alexander's *Live At The Iridium* features **Mark Taylor** and percussionist **Robert Thomas Jr**.

Fred Eltringham (Gigolo Aunts, Ben Kweller) is on The Wallflowers' latest, *Rebel, Sweetheart*.

Ben Mize (Cracker, Counting Crows) is on Acetate's debut, *This Band Makes Me Feel*.

Our condolences go out to **Craig Krampf**, whose wife Susie passed away on March 29 after a struggle with cancer. Donations can be made payable to the Susie Krampf Medical Fund and sent to First Tennessee Bank, 7220 Nolensville Rd., Franklin, TN 37135.



Teddy Campbell has been impressive on the hit show *American Idol*.

TAIT'S Chad Chapin Band Of Brothers

"It's definitely hotter when you have blood running in the rhythm section," says Tait drummer Chad Chapin. Chapin and his bass-wielding brother Lonnie began playing together twenty-two years ago at their dad's church in Bend, Oregon. "We'd go down to church at night and write bass and drum riffs—it was what we did. We worked on different timing and learning tight and intricate things together. It helped us learn how to lay it down nice and fat."

Over the past four years, the Chapin brothers have played together professionally as the driving force behind the straightforward rock band Tait. "Lonnie and I are like Siamese twins," he says. "I know all of his little quirks, and he knows mine. We'll go into a break and end up playing the same line. We'll look at each other and just laugh."

Chapin's drumset of choice is a vintage Slingerland kit that features a 24" bass drum, a 13" rack tom and two floor toms—14" and 16"—along with an 8"-deep Pearl brass free-floating snare. He uses Pro-Mark 747 sticks and Meinl cymbals—a 20" ride, and 18", 19", and 20" crashes. As for his hi-hats, Chad employs an 18" flat ride on the bottom and an 18" rock crash on top. "My hi-hats are explosive," Chapin says. "I do a ton of sessions, and it's the same story. Every new producer says, 'Is this a joke?' But within about two minutes, they're saying, 'Those are the best sounding hi-hats I've ever heard.' They don't get washy like 14" hats. They just stay sizzling."

Chapin is a sought-after session player in Nashville, but playing live is really his niche. "I'm a huge fan of Taylor Hawkins, Dave Grohl, and John Bonham," Chad enthuses. "Not only are they great drummers, but they know how to put on a show."

Stylistically, Chapin has been called "the Tommy Lee of Christian music," and he, too, allows the groove to engulf him. "I bring passion into my playing," he says. "In Nashville, and when we tour, I see so many stale, boring drummers out there. When I'm done with a show, I feel like I've sprinted for twenty miles. I can't even breathe, and my lungs are burning. And I play that way whether there are two hundred people in the audience or twenty thousand."

Steven Douglas Losey

DEL CASTILLO'S

Rick "The Rev" Holeman & Mike Zeoli

Spicy Sonic Magic

They would either "make magic together" or become "the biggest train wreck Austin, Texas has ever heard." That was what multi-percussionist Rick "The Rev" Holeman told drummer/percussionist Mike Zeoli when the two teamed up in Del Castillo, an Austin sextet that blends joyous Latin music—including dueling nylon-string guitar-enriched flamenco sections—with spirited rock. As it turns out, spicy sonic "magic" is precisely what Zeoli and Holeman create in Del Castillo.

The band has cooked up quite a stir across the US, thanks especially to their second album, *Vida*. In fact, the sextet has scored more awards in Austin than can fit here. Some of those include Best Latin Contemporary Band, Best Band Of The Year, Album Of The Year, and Drummer Of The Year. Del Castillo have also hit the big screen with the song "Dias De Los Angeles," which is featured in the film *Once Upon A Time In Mexico*. The flick's New York premiere bash featured the group jamming with stars Antonio Banderas and Cheech Marin, and director Robert Rodriguez.

Speaking of jamming, it's certainly a part of Del Castillo. "There is some improvisation in the drums and percussion, but the brothers improvise *a lot* with their guitar solos," Holeman says. He cites Santana as a key influence. And like "the Santana guys," Holeman and Zeoli display "high energy" and a lot of odd phrasing.

Equipped with a Tama Granstar kit, which was acquired in '89, Zeoli usually lays down foundations and Holeman fills in and accentuates, but that's not set in stone. "There's one song on our first album, *Brothers Of The Castle*, where I'm on congas," says Holeman, who plays a Latin Percussion setup. "I strive to bring rhythms, textures, and layers with hand instruments or whatever on top of what Mike's doing. Being open-minded allows us to really create magic with our grooves."

Jeff Perlah

DRUM DATES

This month's important events in drumming history

Philly Joe Jones was born on 7/15/23, **Alan Dawson** on 7/14/29, and **Eric Carr** on 7/12/50.

On 7/1/71, Jethro Tull (with **Clive Bunker** on drums) have their first US top-10 hit with "Aqualung."

On 7/9/72, in what will be his first live performance since the breakup of The Beatles, Paul McCartney's Wings (with **Denny Seiwell** on drums) makes its concert debut in Chateauvillon, France.

On 7/23/89, **Ringo Starr** premiers his first All-Starr Band concert tour with **Jim Keltner** and **Levon Helm** joining him on drums.

Happy Birthday!

Louie Bellson (jazz legend): 7/6/24

Joe Morello (jazz giant): 7/17/28

Rashied Ali (free-jazz great): 7/1/35

Ringo Starr (The Beatles): 7/7/40

Butch Miles (Count Basie Orchestra): 7/4/44

Johnny Jai Johnson (Allman Brothers): 7/8/44

Dino Danelli (The Rascals): 7/23/45

Mitch Mitchell (Jimi Hendrix): 7/9/47

Don Henley (The Eagles): 7/22/47

Michael Shrieve (Santana): 7/6/49

Roger Taylor (Queen): 7/26/49

Simon Kirke (Free, Bad Company): 7/28/49

Andy Newmark (studio great): 7/14/50

Tris Imboden (Chicago): 7/27/51

Leon "Ndugu" Chancler (R&B great): 7/1/52

Stewart Copeland (The Police): 7/16/52

Chet McCracken (Doobie Brothers): 7/17/52

Jason Bonham (rock independent): 7/15/66

Marky Ramone (Ramones): 7/15/56

Bobby Previte (jazz independent): 7/16/57

Bruce Crump (Molly Hatchet): 7/17/57

Nigel Twist (The Alarm): 7/18/58

Bill Berry (R.E.M.): 7/31/58

Paul Geary (Extreme): July 24, 1961

Jack Irons (Red Hot Chili Peppers, solo): 7/18/62

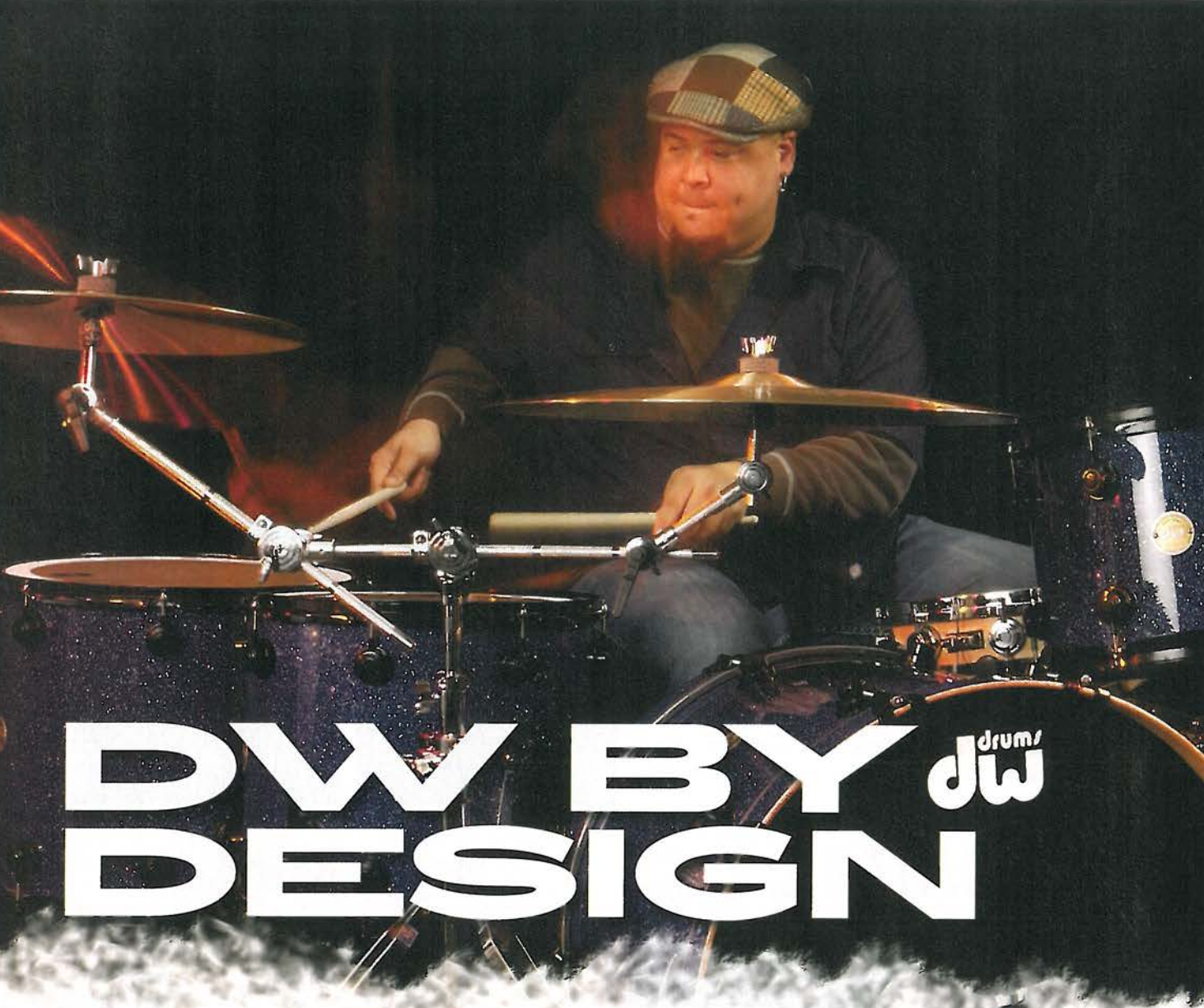
Evelyn Glennie (percussion great): 7/19/65

Chad Gracey (Live): 7/23/71

William Goldsmith (Fire Theft): 7/4/72

Brad Hargreaves (Third Eye Blind): 7/30/72

Will Champion (Coldplay): 7/31/77



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ABE LABORIEL, JR.

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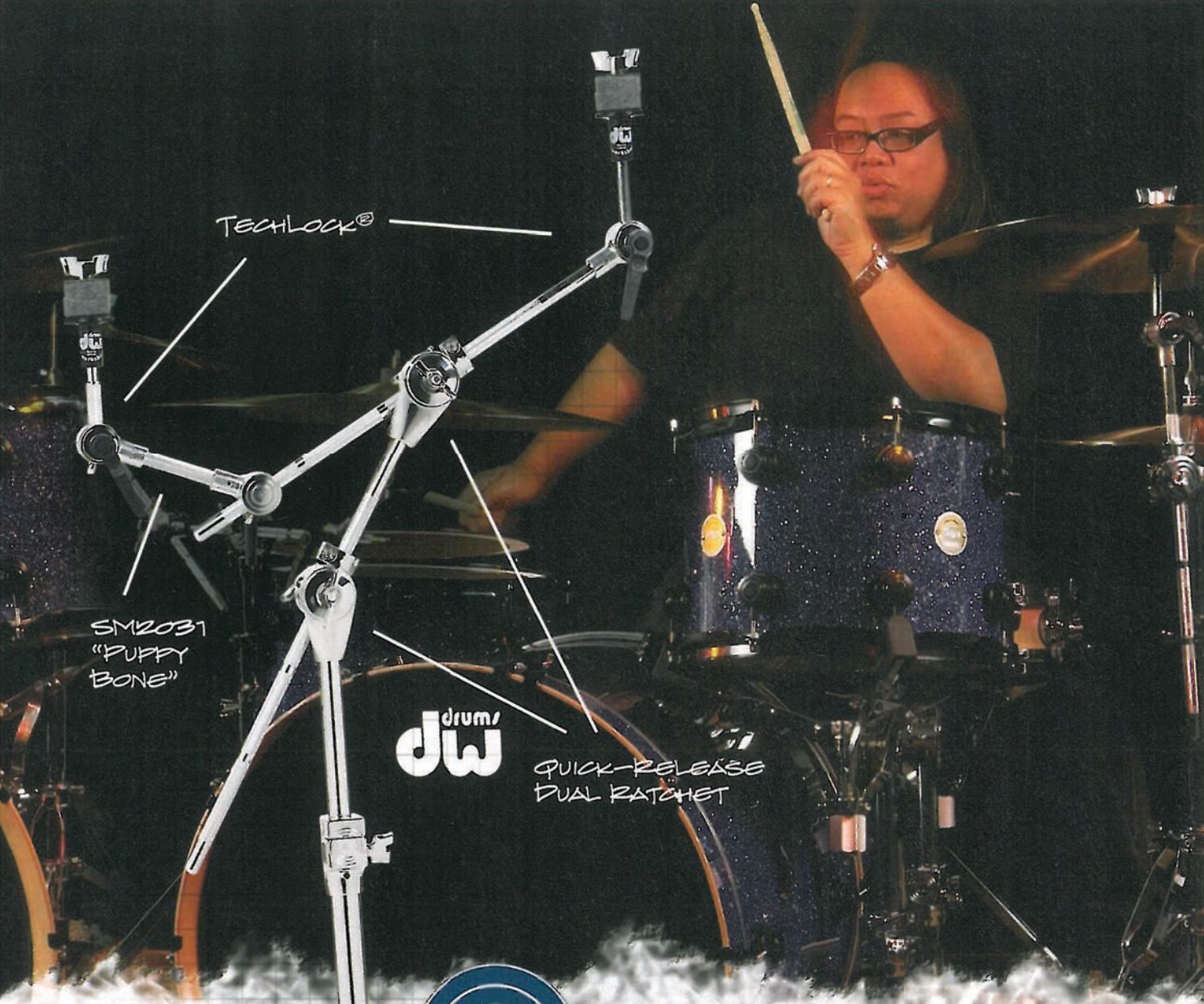
EFFECTS CYMBAL SETUP

PERCUSSION/ CYMBAL SETUP

DUAL CYMBAL/BELL SETUP

PERCUSSION/ EFFECTS SETUP

DUAL CYMBAL SETUP

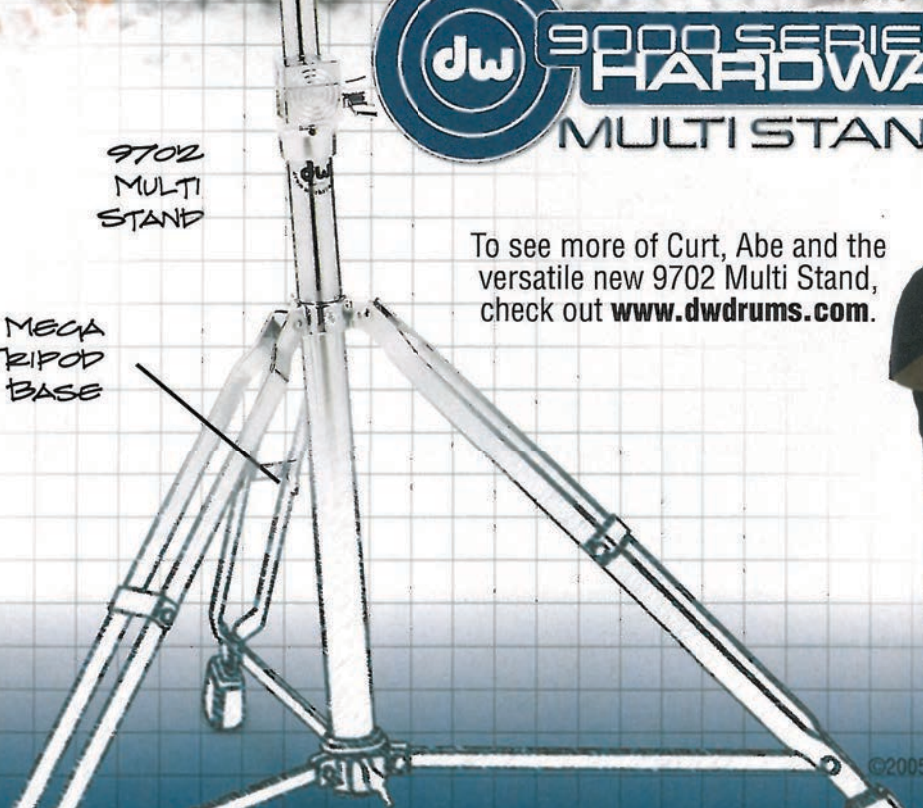


9000 SERIES HARDWARE

MULTI STAND

9702 MULTI STAND

MEGA TRIPOD BASE



To see more of Curt, Abe and the versatile new 9702 Multi Stand, check out **www.dwdrums.com**.

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Mapex Orion Maple Kit

Versatility And Elegance

HITS

beautiful lacquer finish

quality shell construction and precision bearing edges

innovative hardware design

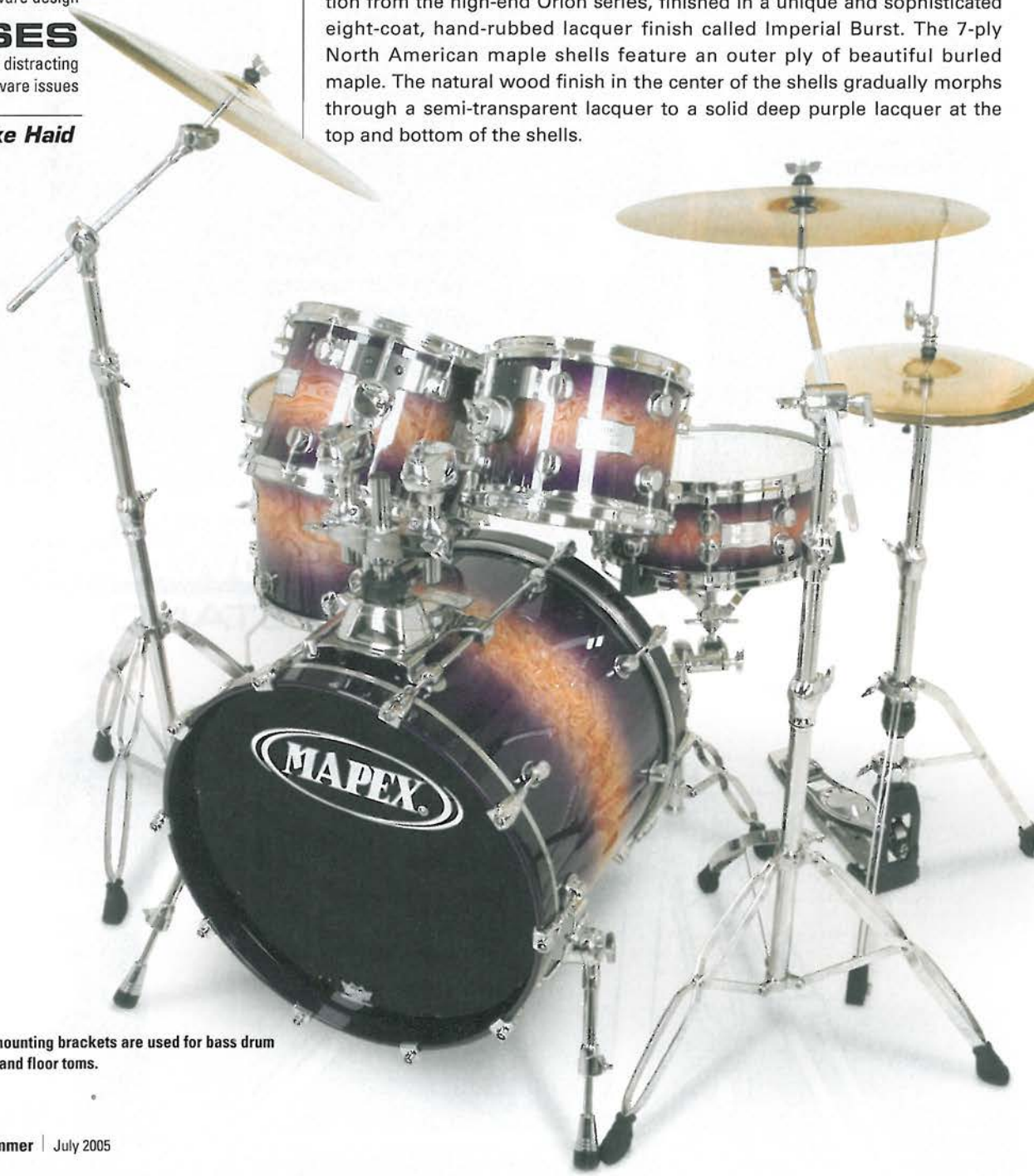
MISSES

several distracting hardware issues

by Mike Haid

The Mapex Drum Company has been quietly and methodically gaining respect and acceptance among drummers as the result of innovative design, quality workmanship, impressive marketing, and increasing artist endorsements. The company now offers a full line of kits ranging from entry-level to high-end.

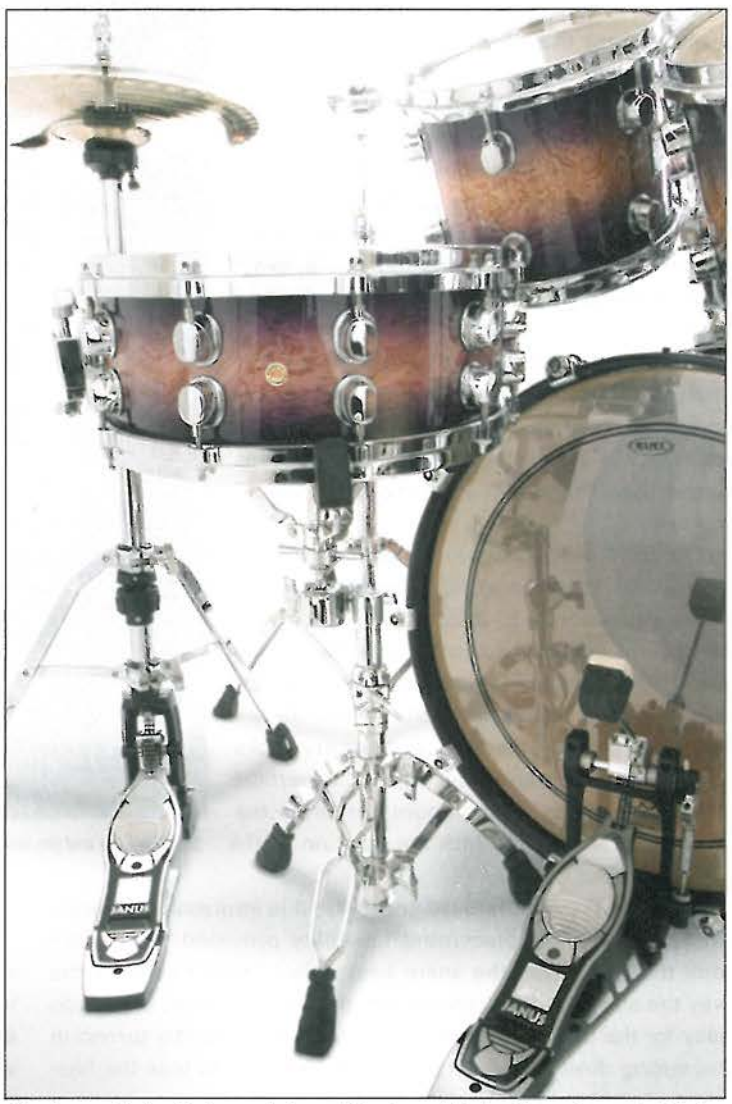
The kit we were sent for review was a five-piece special-order configuration from the high-end Orion series, finished in a unique and sophisticated eight-coat, hand-rubbed lacquer finish called Imperial Burst. The 7-ply North American maple shells feature an outer ply of beautiful burled maple. The natural wood finish in the center of the shells gradually morphs through a semi-transparent lacquer to a solid deep purple lacquer at the top and bottom of the shells.



Innovative off-the-shell mounting brackets are used for bass drum spurs as well as on rack and floor toms.

Mapex chose to send this kit to illustrate the flexibility of the Orion series, and the capabilities of their "Dream Kit Program." That program is based on the theory that players willing to invest in a kit in this price range will probably want to go beyond "standard" configurations and order the exact sizes and look that they prefer. Accordingly, the Orion series offers eight bass drum sizes, sixteen rack tom sizes, seven floor tom sizes, and two snare drum sizes. Finishes include Antique Ivory, Coffee Burst, Ebony Burst, Imperial Burst, Teal Burst, Transparent Amber, and Transparent Red. Drum hardware, including hoops, lugs, and tension rods, is available in chrome, black chrome, and gold.

I'm going to pare this review down to two simple categories: drums and hardware. And we're going to start with...



Interchangeable footplates are features of the Janus hi-hat and bass drum pedals that came with our review kit.

The Hardware

In my years of reviewing high-end drumkits, I've rarely run across drums that didn't sound great or shells that weren't well constructed. So, to my way of thinking, it's the hardware that separates an "average" high-end kit from a "great" high-end kit. I want hardware that is well-constructed, highly functional, lightweight, durable, and as inconspicuous as possible in order to allow the beauty of the shells to take center stage.

Let's start with the Orion kit's TH685 bass drum–mounted tom holder. I found positive and negative aspects to the design of this item. On the positive side, the mount doesn't penetrate the bass drum shell, thus reducing interference with the drum's resonance. Instead, the mount slides forward and back on mounting rods for versatile positioning. This positioning is facilitated by loosening two round-headed bolts, which I found difficult to adjust once the toms were mounted.

The tom holder features ball & socket arms, which provide multiple height, depth, and angle adjustments for precise tom placement. The independent removable tom arms can rotate 360° and be raised and lowered within the mount, and are secured with memory locks. But the mount does not allow the option of bringing each arm forward individually; it's all or nothing.

Even with all nuts, bolts, and memory locks tightly secured, there was still quite a bit of play in the adjustable central mounting bar. This allowed the toms to swivel on the mount a bit too much.

I also found the double tom holder a bit bulky and visually distracting from the expensive look and radiant beauty of the drumshells. I'd prefer to have no mount on the bass drum at all, and instead suspend the toms from stands. However, many drummers value the convenience afforded by mounting their toms on the bass drum. The choice would be yours.

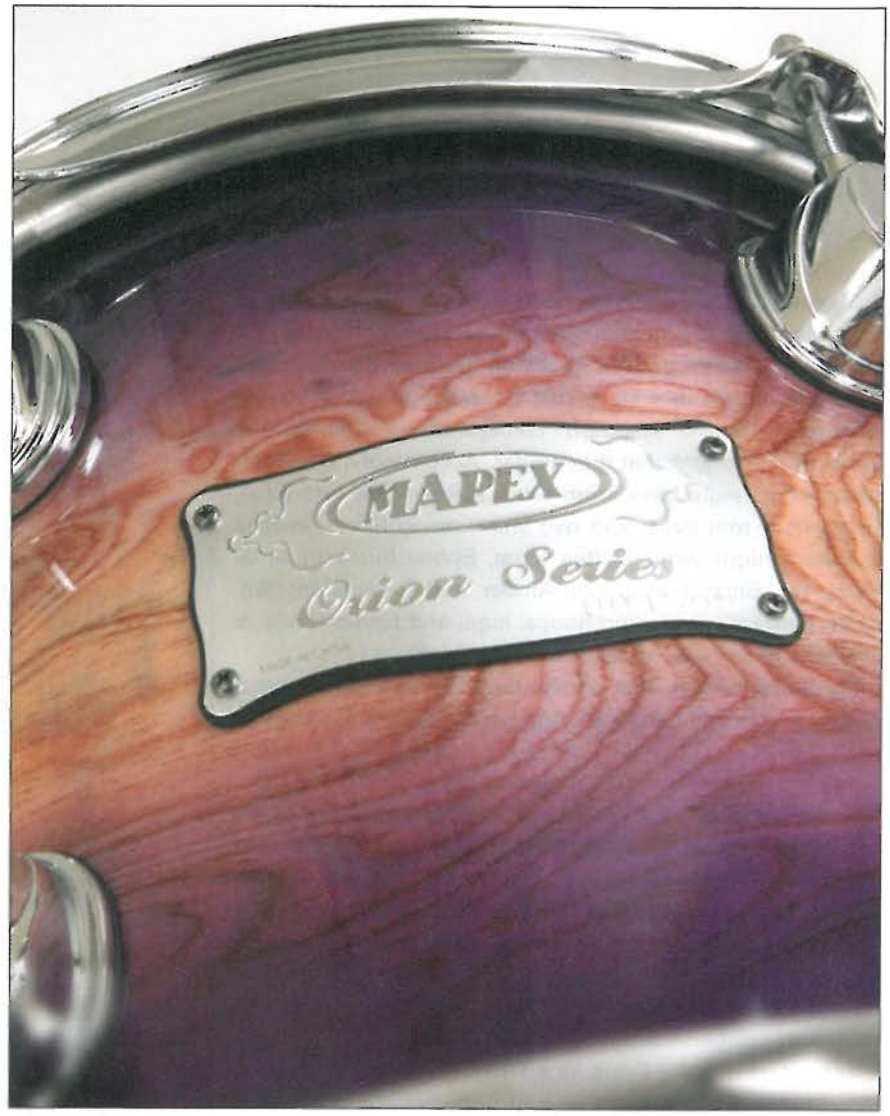
Mapex's off-the-shell, isolated rack-tom brackets feature a very practical design. The brackets attach between two lug casings and the plastic gaskets that meet the shell beneath them.

This design permits easy head changes with no obstruction from the mount. The low-mass lugs themselves are attractive, and they attach to the shell with a single screw in order to create fewer points of contact for increased drum resonance.

The floor-tom mounts may be the most innovative design I've encountered for an off-the-shell, isolated mount with legs. The bracket design is exactly like that used on the rack toms, except that the brackets are secured between two bottom lug casings. The legs screw into shock-mounted rubber feet, which, in theory, absorb the shock of the pounding and prevent drum resonance from being tapped off by floor-to-leg contact. I liked the half moon–shaped memory locks found on the tom mounts. They permitted stable, exact replacement positioning, and they looked great.

The bass drum legs also feature the off-the-shell, isolated mounting system with shock-mounted feet. Keep in mind that these mounts will create the need for drum cases larger than the actual shell diameter would indicate.

The B950 straight/boom cymbal stands are heavy-duty, stable, and sleek, and have a versatile adjustable ball joint at the end of the boom arm where the cymbal attaches to the stand. The cymbal is placed between circular rubber pieces rather than felts, which allows for more cymbal resonance. Memory locks are installed on both of the adjustable vertical tubes, though not on the boom arm or on the main vertical shaft (to lock the position of the double-braced tripod).



Smaller logo badges would allow more of the beautiful Imperial Burst finish to show.

The versatility of the S950 snare stand is impressive. I particularly enjoyed the placement flexibility provided by the ball joint that controlled the snare basket. But I didn't care for the way the snare basket screwed into the ball joint arm. It was too easy for the basket to come unscrewed when slightly turned in the wrong direction. A drumkey-operated bolt to lock the basket in place would probably solve this.

The Janus Ergo Hat hi-hat stand and Ergo single bass drum pedal (with reversible felt/hard rubber beater) were among the smoothest and most stable double-chain pedals I've tested. Both are simple in design and easy to adjust.

The Janus bass drum pedal was reviewed at length in the May 2004 *MD*. I'll just add that while the interchangeable Ergo Plates (foot plates) are a novel concept, they didn't really work for me. I'm sure they could be helpful in tailoring the feel of the pedals for certain players. But the standard foot plate worked fine for my foot technique. The shorter plate simply restricted my foot-placement options.

The Drums

The Orion kit's 7-ply, 6.1-mm North American maple shells are expertly handcrafted, with flawless bearing edges that contribute to the drums' superb tone and resonance. And I can't say enough about the beautiful Imperial Burst lacquer finish. With no disrespect to the Mapex brand name, I would suggest replacing the large silver logo badges that came on this kit with a smaller, more stylish badge in order to allow more of the magnificent shells to be seen in all their glory.

The 8x10, 9x12, and 14x14 toms were shipped with Remo clear Ambassadors on top and bottom, which seemed a perfect choice for these sweetly resonating shells. When tuned up, the toms sang brightly; when tuned down, they rumbled with deep, dark, fat precision (which was especially impressive when you consider their relatively small sizes). Placing O-rings over the clear Ambassadors fattened up the tone perfectly; there was no need to change to a two-ply head. The 2.3-mm Powerhoops on the toms helped sharpen the tone.

The 18x22 bass drum came fitted with a Remo PowerStroke 3 clear batter head and an Ebony PowerStroke 3 solid resonant head. With this head combination it needed no internal muffling, and it produced plenty of punch, thickness, depth, and projection. In fact, on certain gigs I had to lighten up on it because of its ability to carry. I might prefer a smaller bass drum and different heads for acoustic jazz, but generally this drum worked well for me in every musical situation I tried it on.

The 5½x14 burled maple snare drum stole my heart. With its die-cast hoops and Remo coated Ambassador batter, it rang like a bell. Its dual snare adjustment provided pinpoint precision and articulation worthy of a concert drum. Yet when I tuned it down and threw an O-ring on it, it kicked the fattest groove right in the teeth. Oh yes, I loved this drum!

Summary

You can't go wrong with the quality and craftsmanship of the Orion maple shells and precision bearing edges, and the sound that they create. And you'd be hard pressed to find a more beautiful and unique finish than the hand-rubbed Imperial Burst. I did have issues with certain hardware items on our review kit. But with the flexibility of the Mapex Dream Kit Program, it's possible that any hardware issues you have could easily be resolved. So if you're serious about seeking out a great high-end kit, you should definitely check out the Orion line.

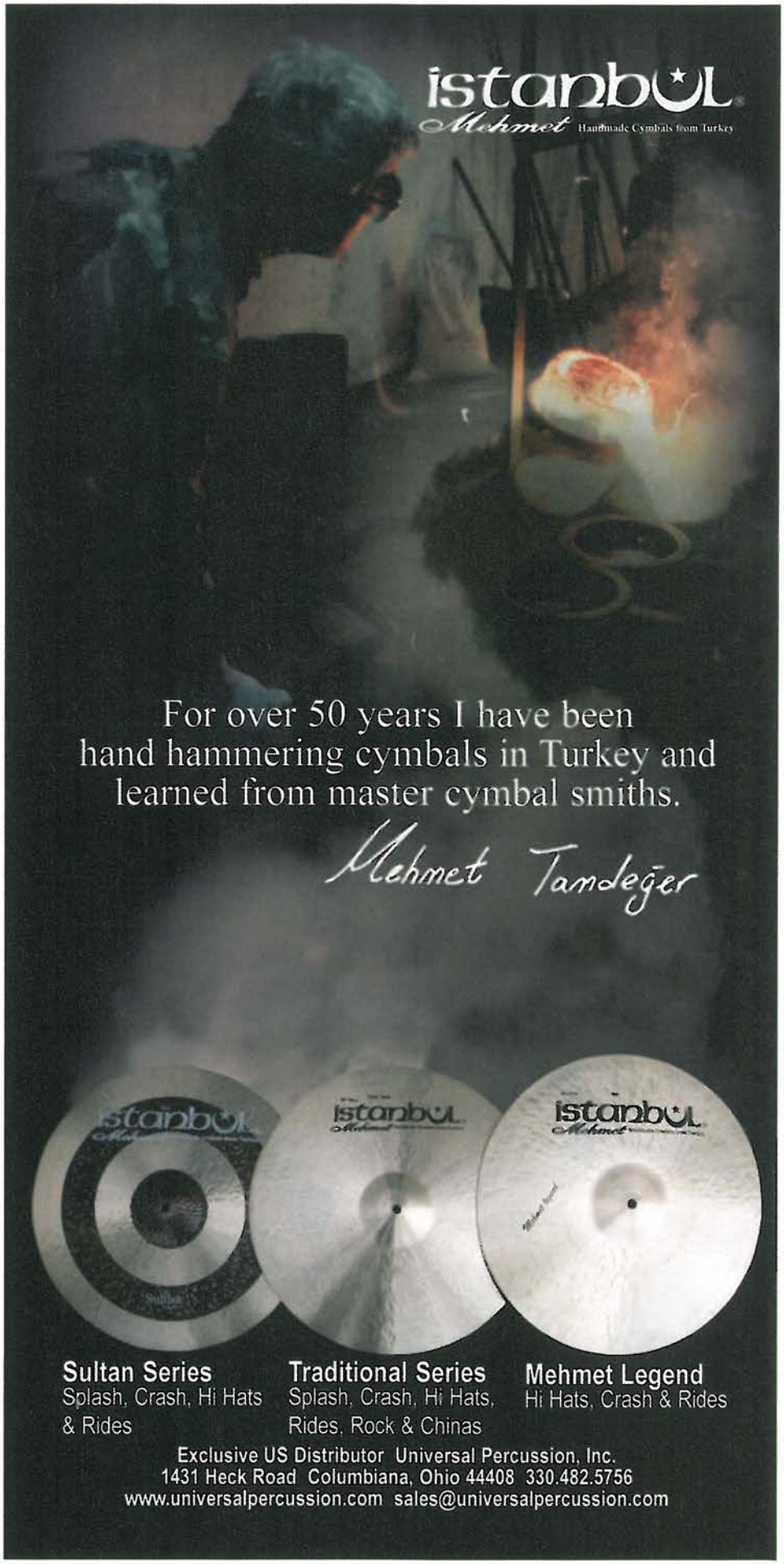
THE NUMBERS

Configuration: Custom outfit including 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms, a 14x14 floor tom, an 18x22 bass drum, and a 5½x14 snare drum, all with 7-ply maple shells. Shells feature an outer ply of burled maple, with Imperial Burst lacquer finish. The hardware package includes two cymbal boom stands, a snare stand, a Janus hi-hat stand, and a Janus single bass drum pedal.

List price **$5,450**

Mapex also offers the Orion series in several five- and six-piece "stock" configurations. Five-piece "Standard" and "Fusion" catalog sets list for $5,250.

(615) 793-2050, www.mapexdrums.com.



New Zildjian A Custom And K Custom Models

Variations On Several Themes

13" K Custom Special Dry hi-hats and 20" K Custom Session ride

HITS

A Custom medium crashes offer cutting volume and heavy sustain

20" K Custom Session ride is versatile and articulate

13" K Custom Special Dry hi-hats produce big-time sound

MISSES

thickness of crashes sometimes makes for more of a bell than a roar

K Custom Session ride lacks the advertised dark qualities of Steve Gadd's ride

by Robin Tolleson

I've come to the conclusion that the Zildjian Company never considers any product line "complete." I guess they figure that if a line offers attractive characteristics upon its initial release, then those characteristics can be applied to other sizes, or weights, or finishes later on, in order to offer drummers even more choices.

That philosophy has prompted Zildjian to expand their A Custom line with new medium-weight crashes, and to add a 20" Session ride and 13" Special Dry hi-hats to the K Custom series. Let's take a look at these recent introductions.

A Custom Medium Crashes

The original A Custom crashes, designed in conjunction with Vinnie Colaiuta, were fairly thin, quick to respond, and dynamically accommodating. The new medium crashes are heavier than their predecessors. This gives them a very defined stick impact sound, along with plenty of cut at high volume. But it's not as easy to make them "sing."

In order to get a medium-weight crash to open up, a drummer pretty much has to whack it with authority. And the A Custom mediums did get good and loud when I really tagged them. If I was playing a lot of metal or other heavy music, these crashes might be the perfect solution to a not-so-subtle guitarist, and I'd probably want a full set of them shining brightly on stage. However, for situations where a wider dynamic range is called for, the A Custom mediums might not be the best musical choice.

A Custom medium crashes

There are seven sizes of A Custom medium crashes: 14" through 20". Each size had a distinctly different acoustic performance from all the others. To begin with, the 14" seems to be suffering from an identity crisis. It thinks it's a hi-hat bottom—and it would probably make a great one. But when hit hard as a crash, it had a bell-like sound that I might associate more with a Zildjian ZBT cymbal. The 15" crash offers a more attractive sound. (It just takes a bigger cymbal to sing at this thickness.)

If I were putting together a versatile fusion kit, I might use the 16" and 18" A Custom mediums for my mid-to-low sustained crashes. The 17" and 19" sizes, on the other hand, will likely appeal to drummers looking to augment an existing setup, with more distinct tones and harmony among the cymbals. These big crashes are not for the faint of heart. They make a *lot* of sound. And the 19" also performs decently as an alternative ride.

It's tempting to ride on the 20" crash, too. And this can be done—in short bursts. But the overtone buildup will prevent any lengthy riding. Leave the 20" crash for that *very* heavy punctuation.

20" K Custom Session Ride

This is a very attractive cymbal, both visually and acoustically. It's hand-hammered, with a brilliant finish (which is somewhat rare in the K domain). The bell reflects like a mirror. The cymbal has a bright sound, with a well-defined ping. The large bell also offers many sonic options.

I was surprised by the amount of overtones that built up when I was playing the ride by itself. But when I played it in a group situation, the wash was not a problem. The cymbal could also be crashed to punctuate a ride pattern, without overpowering the groove.

Zildjian says that the original 18" K Custom Session ride was modeled after Steve Gadd's favorite cracked ride cymbal, and that the 20" size is a slightly more powerful version of that model. But, to be honest, I don't hear that. To me, Steve's classic ride sounds have been drier, to the point of sounding almost choked. The 20" K Custom Session ride breathes much more freely. I'm not saying that's a *bad* thing. Far from it. I'm just saying that you might want to check out the cymbal's sound for yourself, rather than relying on any advertised comparisons.

13" K Custom Special Dry Hi-Hats

The most intriguing items among our review group were the 13" K Custom Special Dry hi-hats. I'd play these dark and chirpy hats in practically any situation.

The cymbals are hammered, lathed, and left unfinished rather than buffed. This treatment gives them a lot of personality and warmth. They have a strong presence, without being obnoxious. They also perform well at various degrees of open versus closed, with traits equally applicable to rock, hip-hop, jungle, country, and jazz. And, at 13", they make outstanding auxiliary hats.

Conclusion

The selection of cymbals reviewed here is by no means meant to be a unified group. I can't imagine a situation in which I'd use the A Custom medium crashes along with the K Custom Session ride or Special Dry hats. But that's sort of the point. When Zildjian expands their lines with new models, they tend to offer something for everybody. So whether you're a metal-head or a jazzbo, you should find something to like among these latest introductions.

THE NUMBERS

A Custom medium crashes

14"	$225
15"	$247
16"	$271
17"	$298
18"	$320
19"	$346
20"	$367
20" K Custom Session ride	$440
13" K Custom Special Dry hi-hats	$492

(781) 871-2200, www.zildjian.com.

Quick Looks

Big Bang Tom Port Os

Most drummers are familiar with the practice of cutting a hole in a front bass drum head to let air (and resonance) out, and to provide microphone access to the inside of the drum. Many drummers are also familiar with devices that have come on the market over the years to protect the edges of these holes.

The latest of these products is Bass Drum Os, from Big Bang distribution. They're basically two-part plastic rings that snap together to mount firmly on a drumhead, and are further secured by an adhesive between the sections. Diameters of 4" and 6" are available. Along with Bass Drum Os, Big Bang also offers Tom Port Os, which have 2" diameters. And although one or more of these small Os could certainly be installed on a bass drum, Big Bang recommends them for a more intriguing purpose.

That purpose is to "open up" the sound of a tom-tom. By installing a Tom Port O in the bottom head to let air out and quicken the drum's response, a boomy tom could be made more controllable, without having to muffle the top head. As a side benefit, a hole in the bottom head could provide access for a microphone, permitting a sort of internal (or at least more isolated) miking option.

I first tested this concept on a *very* resonant 16x16 floor tom. Installing the Tom Port O was easy. One half of the ring is designed to be a cutting template for use with a razor knife. (Big Bang also sells an adjustable cutting tool, at $9.95.) Once I had the hole cut, I just snapped the two halves of the Tom Port O together, securing them firmly onto the drumhead about 2" in from the rim.

Sure enough, letting more air out of the drum did make it less ringy—which, in turn, tended to enhance attack and punch. I didn't hear any significant effect on acoustic volume level...just a reduction in overall sustain. The drumhead offered a little less rebound than normal, which might be a good or a bad thing, depending on one's technique.

When I tried the Tom Port Os on smaller toms, any drum smaller than 13" lost too much presence—in terms of pure acoustic performance. But then I tried attaching clip-on mic's to the bottom rims, pointed inside the drums. This captured a sound that was very full...if perhaps a little less "attack-y" than top-miking would produce. And it positioned the mic's completely out of my way on the bottoms of the drums. If I *always* played miked up, I might give this option serious consideration.

If you're not completely happy with your tom sounds—or if you just like to explore new possibilities, I'd suggest that you give Tom Port Os a try. A package of two lists for $16.95 (black and white) or $18.95 (brass, chrome, or four chrome colors). (800) 547-6401, www.bigbangdist.com.

Rick Van Horn

Pearl Ultra-Sound Snare Wires

It's All About The Options

HITS

D-Type has great clarity and sensitivity

Customizable mounting options

MISSES

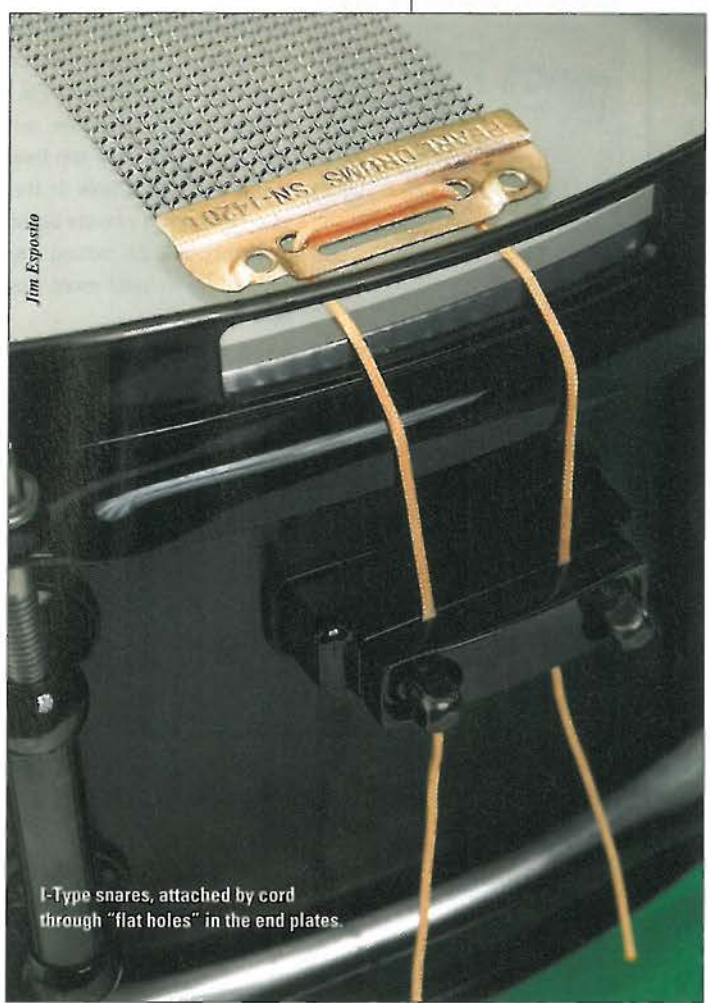
C-Type has limited applications

by Michael Dawson

Isn't it ironic that the one part of the snare drum that's remained relatively unchanged over the years is the part that literally *defines* the drum's sound? It is called a *snare* drum, after all.

Seriously, when was the last time you changed your snare wires? It's probably been a while. Of course, you do have options: You can use gut, or cable, or coated wire snares. But more often than not you end up back where you started, with the familiar 20-strand "snappy" snare variety. And for a perfectly fine reason: They sound good.

Knowing that fact, Pearl decided to dive into the "custom" snare wire market with three variations on the classic "snappy" snare sound. Each is tailored to a specific type of player. All three models feature low-mass phosphor bronze end plates, rustproof wires, and three mounting options. The difference is in the shape of the end plates, and how these different shapes tension the wire strands. The center wires on the C-Type (SN-1420C) are loosely tensioned, while they're tighter on the D-Type (SN-1420D). Wires on the I-Type (SN-1420I) are evenly tensioned.



Jim Esposito

I-Type snares, attached by cord through "flat holes" in the end plates.

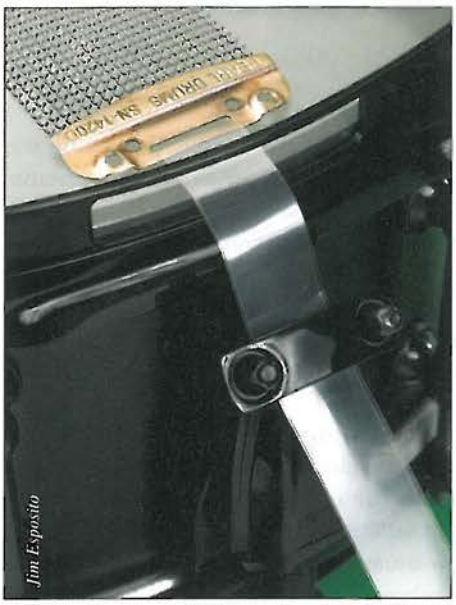
For this review, Pearl also sent three $5^1/_2$x14 aluminum Ultracast snare drums, so we could compare the snare models on identical instruments. Each drum came fitted with a medium-weight coated batter head and a thin clear head on the bottom. Once we got the heads evenly pitched from drum to drum, we attached the snares using the unique "tunnel" mounting option. With this option, the mounting cords are strung through raised holes in the end plates, which allows the plates to lie flat against the head. This results in maximum snare-to-head contact. (More on the other mounting options later.) Here's how they sounded.

I-Type

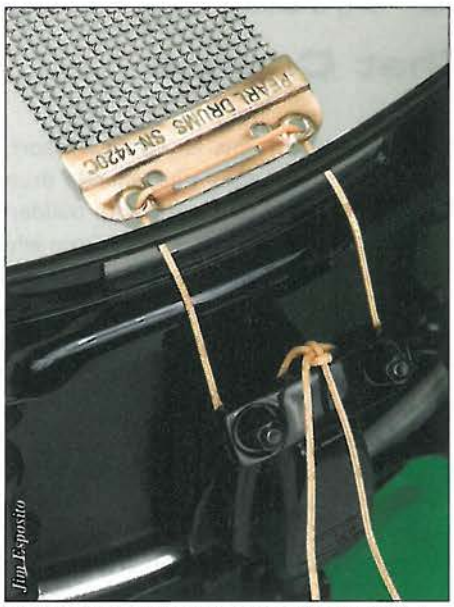
The I-Type is Pearl's even-tensioned model, geared for general-purpose playing. Aside from the bronze end plates, the I-Type looks and sounds similar to any standard 20-strand snare set. With five turns of the snare strainer's thumbscrew, I was able to get a usable loose snare sound, with a moderate amount of spread but not a lot of rattle. One more turn achieved an all-around response that would work well in most drumset applications. It was very sensitive to soft playing, and really opened up in response to a full smack. Basically, the I-Type is a high-quality alternative to a "standard" snare wire set.

D-Type

This model produces graduated strand tension that's tighter towards the center, which increases sensitivity. The best way to describe the D-Type's sound is "controlled." After only three turns of the thumbscrew, I found a usable loose snare sound with an almost "gated" duration. It sounded full and open, without the residual buzz that's common on other snares when tensioned this slack. With one more turn, the sound became



Jim Esposito



Jim Esposito

Left: D-Type snares, attached by straps through slots in the end plates. Right: C-Type snares, attached by cord through "tunnels" in the end plates.

focused and crisp. There was little spread, but the snares remained very sensitive. They responded quickly to light buzz strokes as well as to moderately heavy playing. This model will choke at very high volumes, but that's not the sort of playing it's designed for. The D-Type is meant for "classical" applications, but would work equally well in acoustic jazz and other medium- to low-volume situations where you want the utmost in snare sensitivity and clarity.

C-Type

The C-Type is the least versatile of the three models. Its graduated tension has the center snares looser than the outside wires. This model is meant for hard-hitting applications. At any other dynamic, I had trouble finding a usable sound that wasn't washed with buzz and rattle. On the positive side, these snares can withstand a serious beating without any threats of choking.

Other Mounting Options

In addition to the tunnels, Pearl provides two other options for mounting the Ultra-Sounds. When using the flat holes, the cords lie against the drumhead, causing the end plates to "float" off the head. On all three models, using this option produced similar effects. The snares had a *slightly* wider spread, with a little less clarity. Also, the sound became somewhat "drum-y," sacrificing a touch of snare sensitivity. However, this mounting option did extend the choking point in the upper dynamic ranges, especially on the D-Type.

The third mounting option—plastic straps through slots in the end plates—was the easiest to install and adjust, but yielded the least desirable results. The rigidity of the plastic straps took away some of the snares' sensitivity and response, and caused the D-Type snares to choke more easily. But keep in mind, we're dealing in minutiae here.

Conclusion

All in all, Pearl's Ultra-Sound snare wires are fine additions to the drum accessory market. If you're looking to upgrade from your current set, or if you want to refine your snare sound while retaining that classic "snappy" flavor, then the Ultra-Sounds may be for you. Just be aware that while the I-Type is a great all-purpose snare, the C- and D-Types are very focused, serving specific functions. So choose wisely.

THE NUMBERS

Ultra-Sound Snares (all models) **$18**

(615) 833-4477, www.pearldrum.com.

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Keller Vintage Mahogany Shells

It's What's Inside That Counts

HITS

outstanding construction quality

accurate reproduction of vintage sound

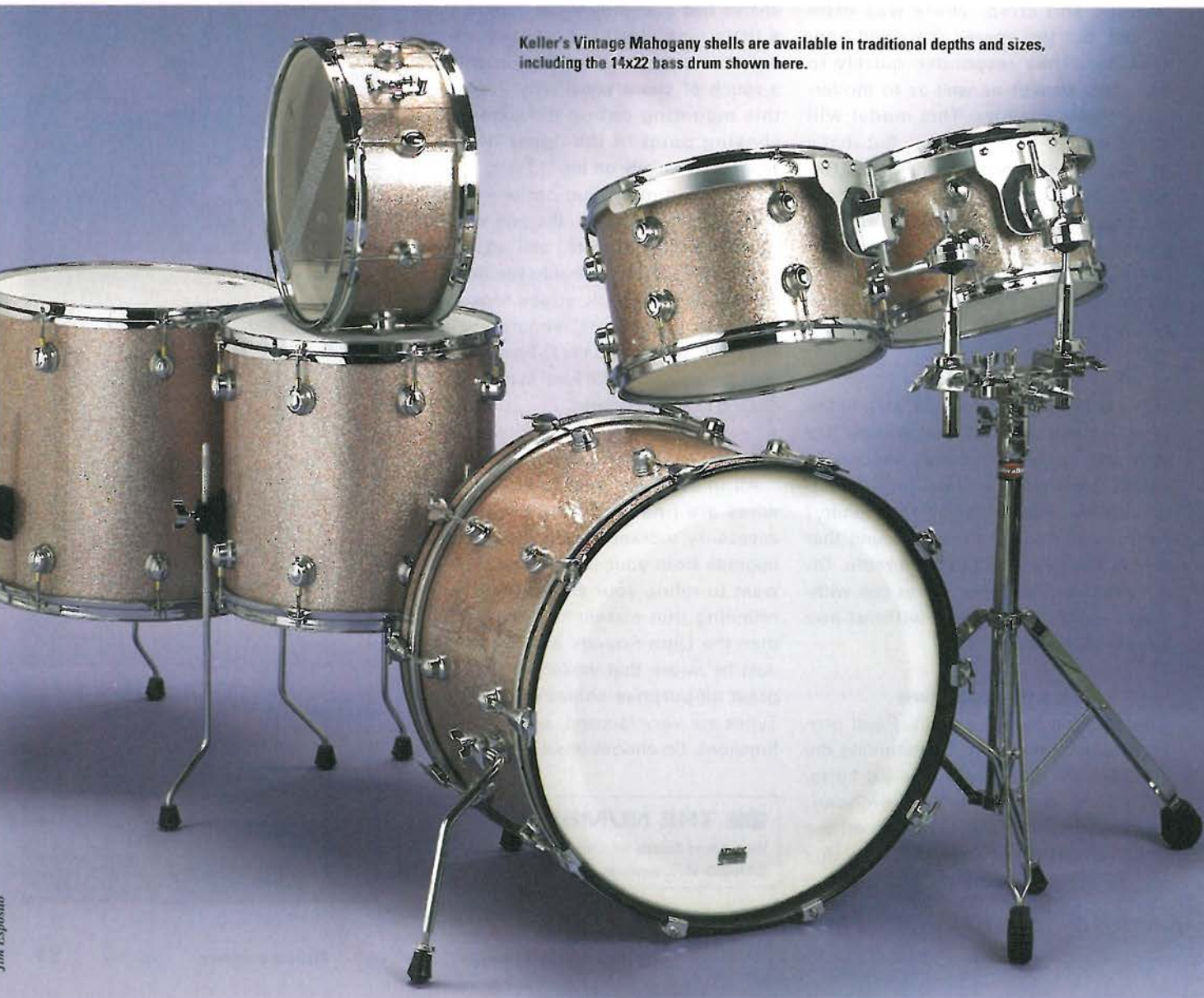
authentic vintage sizes

by Rick Van Horn

To begin with, this is a *different* sort of review. We're not really evaluating the lovely champagne pink sparkle drumkit you see in the accompanying photos. That kit was made by noted drum builder Joe Montineri, specifically to demonstrate the sonic capabilities of the shells from which the drums were constructed. You see, in Joe's "other life," he's a design consultant for Keller Products.

"Ohhhh, Keller," you say. "Haven't they made shells for lots of major American drum companies over the past several decades? In fact, aren't they the company that Harry Cangany recently touted as having made the first 100% maple shells for Rogers Drums back in the late 1970s?"

Yup, same Keller. And they're still making shells for major and minor drum manufacturers alike. But they've recently come "out of the closet," dropping their anonymity to let people know just what sort of shells they can offer *besides* the familiar factory-style maple or birch models. They're still not selling direct to consumers, mind you, except under very special circumstances. The situation is sort of like shopping for a computer and making sure there's a Pentium processor in it. Keller wants you to order your drumset—from whatever source—with a full knowledge of what is available to you, shell-wise.



Keller's Vintage Mahogany shells are available in traditional depths and sizes, including the 14x22 bass drum shown here.

A New Vintage

Which brings us to this unusual review. Among several shell series now available from Keller are Vintage Mahogany models. These 6-ply shells are made of African mahogany and North American poplar, just as most WFL, Ludwig, and Slingerland drums were from the 1930s to the 1960s. The shells are intended to capture what Keller calls a "true 'aged' sound that's rich, robust, and sweet," while offering the advantages of modern-day construction. Those advantages include a staggered-seam laminating process, as well as Keller's own VSS (Vibrating Sound Source) process that conditions each shell and intensifies the classic qualities.

To get an idea of Joe Montineri's specific goals with the Vintage Mahogany kit he created for this review, we asked Joe to outline those goals himself. He responded, "The combination of three plies of mahogany with three integrated plies of poplar is what makes these shells so special. They're the truest vintage replication possible using current manufacturing processes. Obviously, we can't duplicate the old 3-ply steam-bent shells. But I've done my best to mimic old methods in order to recapture the sound of those sought-after vibrating bodies. Each shell is a consistently round and stable cylinder with rigid reinforcing rings specific to this series. Our 10-ply maple rings are 1½" deep on tom, floor tom, and snare shells, and 2" deep on bass drum shells. But the thickness must remain constant, since it dictates support, wall integrity, and projection."

Wood types and reinforcement-ring sizes are not the only elements used to give the Vintage Mahogany shells an authentic character. Vintage sizes are employed as well. For example, bass drum shells are available in 18", 20", 22", and 24" diameters, but only in 14" depths. These sizes may make it possible for an owner of an existing vintage kit to obtain a replacement or add-on drum that sounds and looks authentic enough to be a viable addition—without spending exorbitant amounts of money to find a matching original drum on eBay.

A Closer Look

Our review "kit" included a 14x22 bass drum, a 5x14 snare drum, 8x12 and 9x13 rack toms, and 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms. It was fitted with generic, low-mass hardware that would not have been out of place on kits from the '50s and '60s. The one exception was aluminum-alloy Gauger RIMS mounts for the rack toms. Those toms were mounted on a double tom stand kindly provided by Gibraltar.

All of the drums were fitted with Remo coated Ambassador heads top and bottom, in an effort to match those that would have been common in the '60s. When those heads were removed, rounded vintage-style bearing edges (flawlessly made, by the way) were revealed, along with the dark mahogany interior plies that help to give these shells their "aged" character.

And The Sound

Once again, let's remember that we're not really considering a commercially available finished drumkit here. We're considering what *could* be available if you were to select Keller's Vintage Mahogany shells as the basis for your own drumkit.

Jim Esposito

This photo shows the interior mahogany plies and rounded bearing edges that give Vintage Mahogany shells their "aged" quality.

With that in mind, every editor at *Modern Drummer* played the kit. We all agreed that Joe Montineri and Keller had achieved their goal. These drums constituted a veritable time warp. In and of themselves, they sounded great—bright yet warm, lively yet controlled. But their sound definitely harked back to the days when names like Ludwig, Slingerland, Gretsch, and Rogers dominated the drum world.

How much of that sound can we attribute to the shells alone? Well, let's just say that we've heard a *lot* of other drums fitted with similar heads, and mounted on similar hardware. And they didn't sound like these drums. So we feel confident in saying that the ply composition, bearing edges, and reinforcement rings contributed the greatest percentage of the drums' acoustic character. And all of those contributions came from the Keller Vintage Mahogany shells.

It's Your Choice

If you cherish the sound of vintage drums in general—and of '50s/'60s drums in particular—and you're considering the purchase of a new drumkit, do yourself a favor. Talk to the company or builder that you've selected to make your kit about using Keller Vintage Mahogany shells. Custom finishes and unique hardware fittings are nice. But when it comes to a drum's fundamental sound, it's what's inside that counts.

THE NUMBERS

Keller shells are intended for use in drumkits made by established manufacturers and drum builders. Contact your preferred builder for price information based on the use of Keller shells to construct the kit of your choice.

Vintage Mahogany shells are currently available in the sizes outlined below. Special orders will be considered upon request.

Toms: ..... 8x10, 8x12, 9x13, and 10x14
Floor toms: ..... 14x14, 16x16, and 16x18
Snares: ..... 5x14, 6½x14, and 8x14
Bass drums: ..... 14x18, 14x20, 14x22, and 14x24
(877) 209-9359, www.kellerproducts.com.

YAMAHA CRAFTSMAN PROFILE

FROM BIRTH...

Job Title: Shell Preparation and Sanding Specialist
Years Experience: 17 years
MASAYUKI TAWADA

"Through my many years of making Yamaha Drums, I know the importance of preparing a naked shell for a quality paint finish. The foundation for every drum's appearance begins with my hand-sanding process. Because of this, I am determined to make sure every Yamaha drum looks as good as it sounds."

DETERMINATION

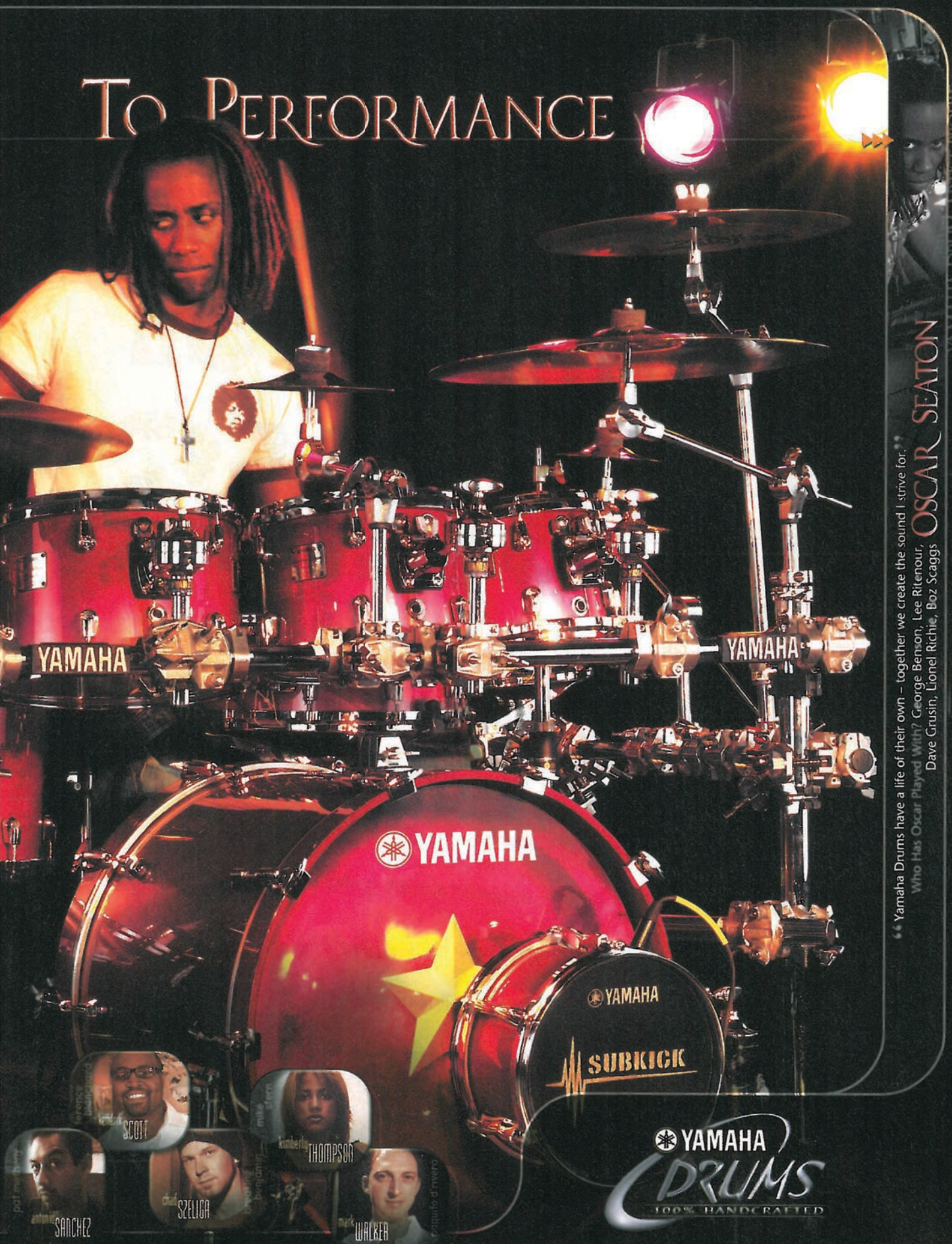
From Benson to Ritenour, Grusin to Scaggs, Oscar's determination to make the music groove is as essential to him as his drums.

Did you know...
At Yamaha Drums, we have ALWAYS created and lacquered ALL of our own shells AND made our own hardware.

Yamaha quality from Birth to Performance, from our hands to yours... who makes your drums?

Absoulte Maple Nouveau in Pink Pearl Fade

ARTISTS IN THE KNOW



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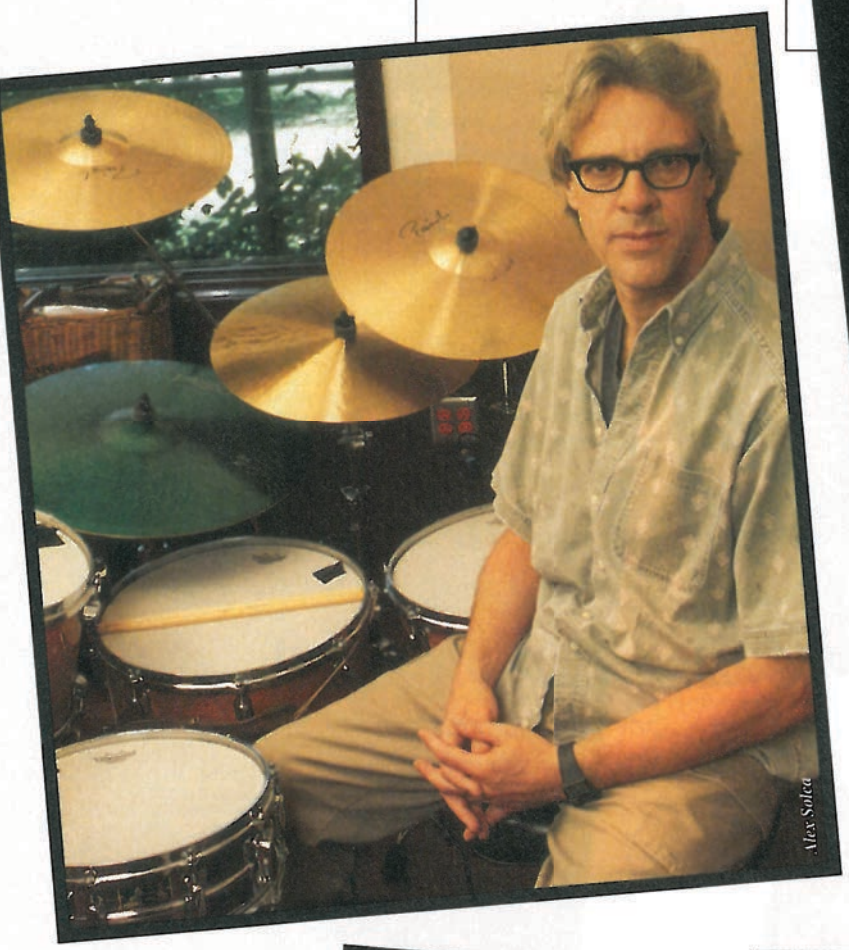
MD's 2005 Readers Poll Results

There's no doubt about it: There are more talented drummers on the

music scene these days than ever before. Music styles are evolving, diversifying, and combining to create new opportunities for young players to impress us.

Meanwhile, the giants of our instrument are still going strong, demonstrating the skills that have kept them at the top for so long. With all this talent to consider, it's no wonder that this year's MD Readers Poll received votes for more than *eight hundred* different drummers—many in several categories. Here are this year's results.



HALL OF FAME
2005: STEWART COPELAND

2004: Mike Portnoy
2003: Simon Phillips
2002: Steve Smith
2001: Dennis Chambers
2000: Dave Weckl
1999: Roy Haynes
1998: Ringo Starr
1997: Terry Bozzio
1996: Vinnie Colaiuta
1995: Elvin Jones
1994: Larrie Londin
1993: Jeff Porcaro
1992: Max Roach
1991: Art Blakey
1990: Bill Bruford
1989: Carl Palmer
1988: Joe Morello
1987: Billy Cobham
1986: Tony Williams
1985: Louie Bellson
1984: Steve Gadd
1983: Neil Peart
1982: Keith Moon
1981: John Bonham
1980: Buddy Rich
1979: Gene Krupa

ALL-AROUND
VINNIE COLAIUTA

2. Josh Freese
3. Dennis Chambers
4. Steve Gadd
5. Steve Smith

STUDIO
JOSH FREESE

2. Vinnie Colaiuta
3. Kenny Aronoff
4. Steve Gadd
5. Steve Ferrone

MAINSTREAM JAZZ
BILL STEWART

2. Roy Haynes
3. Peter Erskine
4. Matt Wilson
5. Jeff Hamilton

CONTEMPORARY JAZZ
DAVE WECKL
2. Steve Smith
3. Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez
4. Antonio Sanchez
5. Dennis Chambers

BIG BAND
LOUIE BELLSON
2. John Riley
3. Ed Shaughnessy
4. Jeff Hamilton
5. Max Weinberg

UP & COMING
CHRIS ADLER (LAMB OF GOD)
2. Tomas Haake (Meshuggah)
3. Terence Higgins (Dirty Dozen Brass Band)
4. Terreon Gully (Christian McBride)
5. Longineu Parsons (Yellowcard)

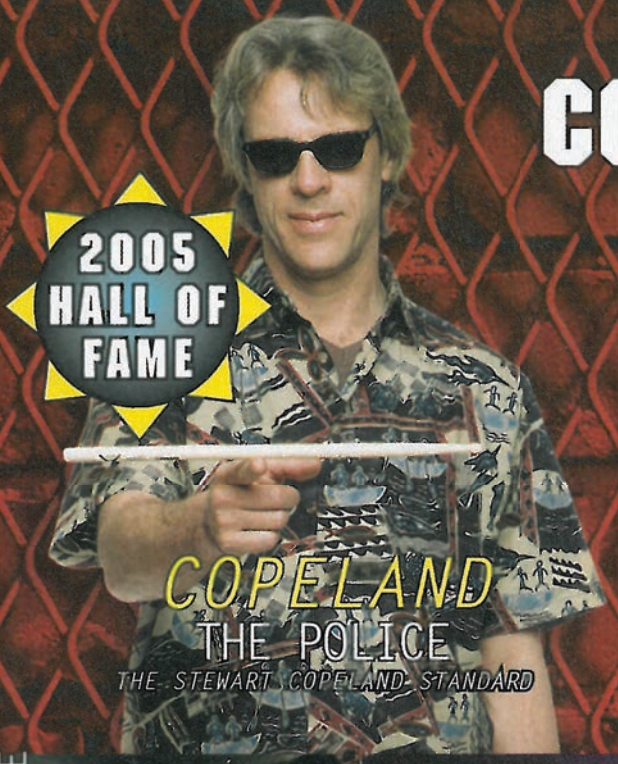
POP
CARTER BEAUFORD
2. Kenny Aronoff
3. Vinnie Colaiuta
4. Abe Laboriel Jr.
5. Teddy Campbell

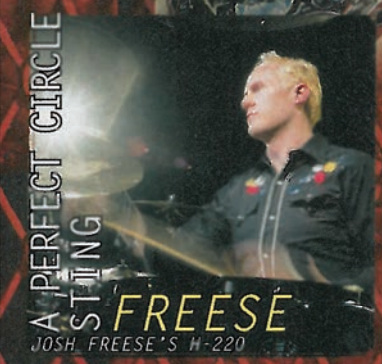
ROCK
CHAD SMITH
2. Josh Freese
3. Danny Carey
4. Jimmy Chamberlin
5. Matt Sorum

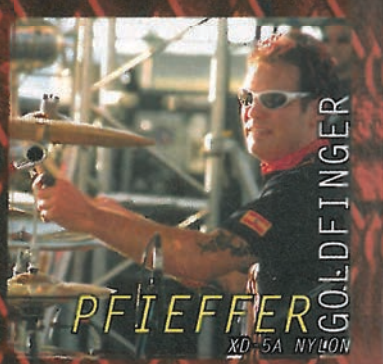
METAL
JASON BITTNER
2. Joey Jordison
3. Tomas Haake
4. Vinnie Paul
5. Lars Ulrich

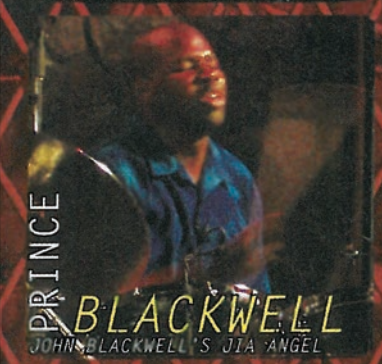
CONGRATULATIONS!

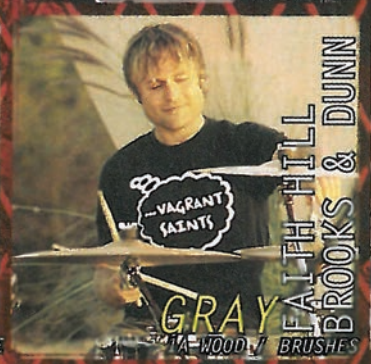
TO OUR ARTISTS WHO PLACED IN THE 2005 MODERN DRUMMER READERS POLL

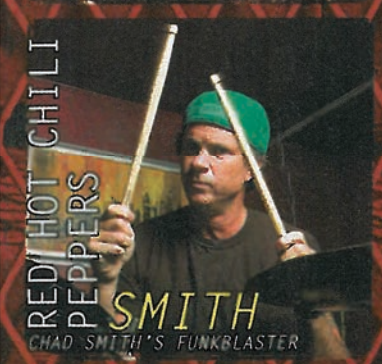












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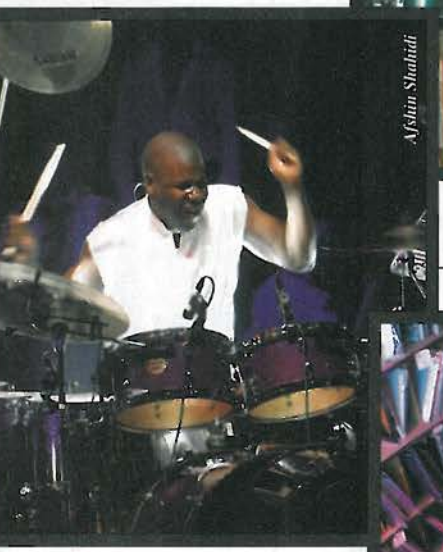


PUNK
TRAVIS BARKER
2. Tré Cool
3. Josh Freese
4. Darrin Pfeiffer
5. Jordan Burns

PROG
MIKE PORTNOY
2. Danny Carey
3. Virgil Donati
4. Neil Peart
5. Mike Mangini

R&B
JOHN BLACKWELL
2. Zoro
3. Ricky Lawson
4. David Garibaldi
5. Stanton Moore

HIP-HOP
AHMIR "?UESTLOVE" THOMPSON
2. Gorden Campbell
3. Gerald Heyward
4. Keith Harris
5. Li'l John Roberts

COUNTRY
PAUL LEIM
2. Billy Mason
3. Eddie Bayers
4. Trey Gray
5. J.D. Blair

HAND PERCUSSIONIST
GIOVANNI HIDALGO
2. Luis Conte
3. Richie Flores
4. Alex Acuña
5. Sheila E

SOUND

CONGRATULATIONS WINNERS

THANKS

VOTERS

STUDIO
Steve Ferrone

CONTEMPORARY JAZZ
#1 Dave Weckl

BIG BAND
Ed Shaughnessy

UP & COMING
Tomas Haake (Meshuggah)
Terreon Gully (Christian McBride, Stefon Harris Blackout)

ROCK
Chad Smith

METAL
Tomas Haake
Vinnie Paul

PROGRESSIVE
#1 Mike Portnoy
Virgil Donati
Neil Peart

R&B
#1 John Blackwell
Zoro
David Garibaldi

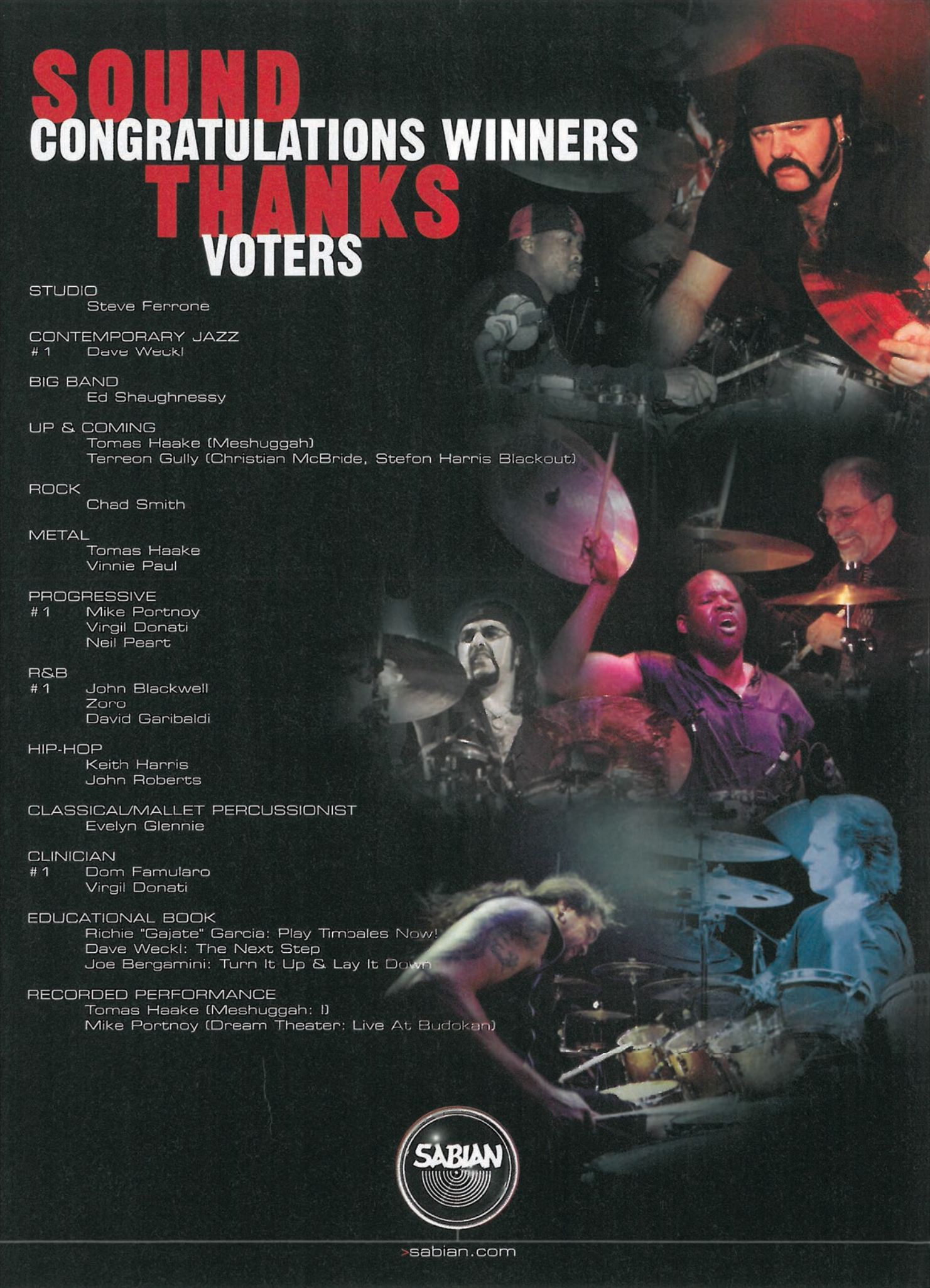
HIP-HOP
Keith Harris
John Roberts

CLASSICAL/MALLET PERCUSSIONIST
Evelyn Glennie

CLINICIAN
#1 Dom Famularo
Virgil Donati

EDUCATIONAL BOOK
Richie "Gajate" Garcia: Play Timbales Now!
Dave Weckl: The Next Step
Joe Bergamini: Turn It Up & Lay It Down

RECORDED PERFORMANCE
Tomas Haake (Meshuggah: I)
Mike Portnoy (Dream Theater: Live At Budokan)



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CLASSICAL/MALLET PERCUSSIONIST
LEIGH HOWARD STEVENS

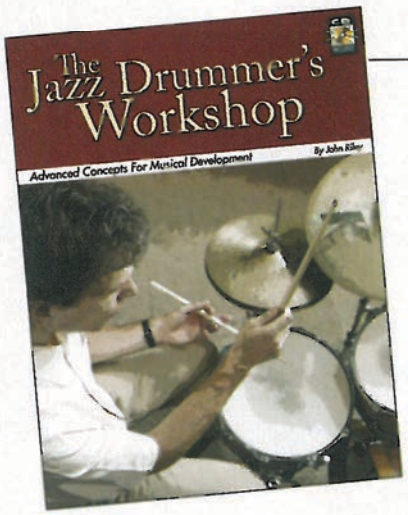
2. Evelyn Glennie
3. Gary Burton
4. Robert Van Sice
5. Chris Lamb

CLINICIAN
DOM FAMULARO

2. Thomas Lang
3. Virgil Donati
4. Mike Mangini
5. Billy Ward

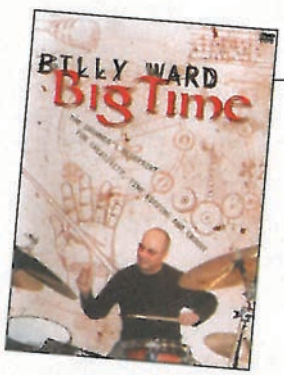
EDUCATIONAL BOOK
JOHN RILEY: *THE JAZZ DRUMMER'S WORKSHOP*

2. Richie "Gajate" Garcia: *Play Timbales Now: The Basics And Beyond*
3. Dave Weckl: *The Next Step*
4. Anthony J. Cirone: *Portraits For Drumset*
5. Joe Bergamini & Kevin Fuhrman: *Turn It Up & Lay It Down—The Book*



EDUCATIONAL DVD
BILLY WARD: *BIG TIME*

2. Tommy Igoe: *Groove Essentials*
3. Giovanni Hidalgo (with Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez): *Traveling Through Time*
4. Kenwood Dennard: *The Studio/Touring Drummer*
5. Various Artists: *American Drummers Achievement Awards Honoring Steve Gadd*



RECORDED PERFORMANCE
JASON BITTNER—SHADOWS FALL: *THE WAR WITHIN*

2. Joey Jordison—Slipknot: *Vol. 3: (The Subliminal Verses)*
3. Tomas Haake—Meshuggah: *I* (EP)
4. Chris Adler—Lamb Of God: *Ashes Of The Wake*
5. Mike Portnoy—Dream Theater: *Live At Budokan*

In order to present the results of our Readers Poll, the votes were tabulated and the top five names in each category listed here.

Jason Bittner
(shadows fall)
#1 metal
#1 recorded performance
(the war within)

John Blackwell
(prince)
#1 r&b

Mike Portnoy
(dream theater)
#1 progressive
#5 recorded performance
(live at budokan)

Hall of Fame
Stewart Copeland

YOU HAVE SPOKEN

Kenny Aronoff
(independent)
#2 pop
#3 studio

Lars Ulrich
(metallica)
#2 metal

Keith Harris
(black eyed peas)
#4 hip-hop

Li'l John Roberts
(independent)
#5 hip-hop

Joe Bergamini
(independent)
#5 educational book

TAMA
THE STRONGEST NAME IN DRUMS

TAMA Would Like To Thank Everyone Who Supported Their Favorite Drummers In The

2005 MODERN DRUMMERS READERS POLL

Jason Bittner and Shadows Fall Live in Philadelphia 10/04

Editors Achievement Award

This award is given by the editors of *Modern Drummer* in recognition of outstanding contribution to the drum/percussion community by a performer, author, educator, manufacturer, etc. The persons so honored may be notable figures in drumming history or active participants on today's scene. The criteria for this award is the value of the contribution(s) made by the honorees, in terms of influence on subsequent musical styles, educational methods, or products. There will be no limit as to the number of honorees that may be designated each year.

For 2005, *MD*'s editors are pleased to honor:

Babatunde Olatunji

Michael Babatunde Olatunji was a pioneer in the field of world music before that term was even coined. He came to America from Nigeria as a young man, attending New York University with the goal of becoming a diplomat. While there, he founded an African-style ensemble that turned him from political to musical diplomacy. For the next forty-plus years, he and his band of drummers, singers, and dancers brought the spirit and soul of the African village to audiences around the world.

Jay Blakesberg

In 1959 Babatunde recorded his seminal *Drums Of Passion*, the first American studio album to feature the power and intricacy of African music. It reached a wide commercial audience and made Babatunde the most visible African musician in America. In addition to making further recordings, Babatunde toured schools, where he fascinated the students by performing in African robes and playing authentic goat-hide drums.

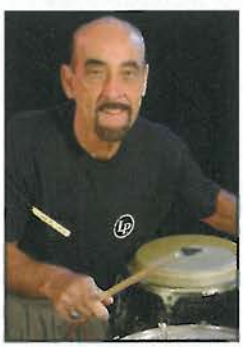
Babatunde's work was the genesis of African-jazz experiments in the 1960s, and his "Jin-Go-Lo-Ba" was remade as "Jingo" to become Santana's first hit single in 1969. Babatunde reversed the process, combining American-style jazz with African music on his own albums.

Babatunde performed at the African Pavilion of the 1964 New York World's Fair. Later, jazz great John Coltrane helped him to establish the Olatunji Center For African Culture in Harlem, which offered music and dance lessons to children until 1988.

In 1985, Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart invited Babatunde to open for the Grateful Dead's New Year's Eve show, bringing his visceral African beat to a new audience. Throughout the 1990s, Babatunde recorded and toured with Hart's world-beat supergroup, Planet Drum. In 1996 he released an instructional video called *African Drumming*.

In recent years Babatunde continued to lead Drums Of Passion, which included students and family members. In 1997, his *Love Drum Talk* album was nominated for a Grammy award, and in 2002 Columbia reissued an expanded version of the original *Drums Of Passion*. Babatunde passed away in April of 2003, leaving an indelible legacy of African music, spirituality, and love of life.

Walfredo de los Reyes Sr.



Walfredo de los Reyes Sr. is one of the most influential drummers to come out of Cuba. He was the first to play Cuban percussion—timbales, congas, and cowbells—and drumset simultaneously. In 1957 Walfredo recorded his all-star album *Cuban Jazz*, with Cachao and famous conga drummers Los Papines. That recording still stands as a seminal work in the Latin jazz idiom.

Walfredo Sr. was also the staff drummer for many years at Cuba's Channel Four TV, where he played with American jazz artists Zoot Sims, Denny Drew, and Philly Joe Jones. Later he formed his own orchestra and performed at the Casino Parisien Nacional Hotel in Havana until leaving Cuba in 1962.

Upon his arrival in New York, Walfredo recorded numerous albums with Tito Puente, Tito Rodriguez, Jose Fajardo, and many more. Then he moved to Puerto Rico, where he worked at the El San Juan Hotel showroom for seven years backing American stars like Sammy Davis Jr., Paul Anka, Jerry Vale, Milton Berle, Bobby Darin, and Liberace. He also continued to record with Puerto Rican musical stars, and he was actively involved in the Puerto Rican jazz movement.

Since that time, Walfredo Sr.'s fifty-year career has included performances with some of the world's greatest artists, in and out of the Latin idiom. As a house drummer in the showrooms of Las Vegas for many years, he backed performers like Wayne Newton, Tony Bennett, George Burns, Robert Goulet, Rich Little, Bernadette Peters, Rita Moreno, Juliet Prowse, Ben Vereen, and Dionne Warwick.

In 2000, Walfredo Sr. joined sons Daniel, Walfredo Jr., and Kamar to perform on Daniel's *San Rafael 560* album, a collection of classic Cuban tunes from the 1940s and '50s that was selected as one of the Top-10 World Music Albums of 2000. In 2001 Walfredo Sr. recorded a CD with an elite group of musicians known as The Original Cuban Masters.

Walfredo Sr.'s diverse musical background also keeps him in demand as one of the most sought-after educators on the clinic scene. His extensive experience, as well as his pioneering efforts at bringing drumset and percussion together, make Walfredo de los Reyes Sr. a unique figure in drumming history.

REMO *Congratulates* OUR MODERN DRUMMER 2005 READERS' POLL WINNERS

HALL OF FAME: *STEWART COPELAND*

ALL-AROUND: *VINNIE COLAIUTA*
Josh Freese, Steve Gadd, Steve Smith

STUDIO: *JOSH FREESE*
Vinnie Colaiuta, Kenny Aronoff, Steve Gadd, Steve Ferrone

MAINSTREAM JAZZ: *Roy Haynes, Matt Wilson, Jeff Hamilton*

CONTEMPORARY JAZZ: *DAVE WECKL*
Steve Smith

BIG BAND: *LOUIE BELLSON*
John Riley, Jeff Hamilton

UP & COMING: *Terence Higgins (Dirty Dozen Brass Band), Terreon Gully (Christian McBride), Longineu Parsons (Yellowcard)*

POP: *Kenny Aronoff, Vinnie Colaiuta, Abe Laboriel Jr., Teddy Campbell*

ROCK: *CHAD SMITH*
Josh Freese, Jimmy Chamberlin, Matt Sorum

METAL: *Joey Jordison, Vinnie Paul, Lars Ulrich*

PUNK: *TRAVIS BARKER*
Tré Cool, Josh Freese. Darrin Pheiffer, Jordan Burns

PROG: *MIKE PORTNOY*
Virgil Donati, Neil Peart, Mike Mangini

R&B: *JOHN BLACKWELL JR.*
Ricky Lawson, David Garibaldi, Stanton Moore

HIP HOP: *AHMIR "?UESTLOVE" THOMPSON*
Gorden Campbell, Gerald Heyward, Keith Harris

COUNTRY: *PAUL LEIM*
Billy Mason, Eddie Bayers, Trey Gray

HAND PERCUSSIONIST: *Luis Conte, Richie Flores, Sheila E*

CLINICIAN: *DOM FAMULARO*
Thomas Lang, Virgil Donati, Mike Mangini

EDUCATIONAL BOOK: *JOHN RILEY - THE JAZZ DRUMMER'S WORKSHOP*
Richie "Gajate" Garcia - Play Timbales Now!
Dave Weckl - The Next Step

EDUCATIONAL DVD: *Tommy Igoe - Groove Essentials, Various Artists - American Drummers Achievement Awards Honoring Steve Gadd*

RECORDED PERFORMANCE: *Joey Jordison - Slipknot: Vol. 3: (The Subliminal Verses), Mike Portnoy - Dream Theater: Live At Budokan*

REMO
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Bob Gatzen

Bob Gatzen has been justifiably described as drumming's Renaissance Man. The simple fact is, there's not much that he *doesn't* do.

Many drummers are familiar with Bob as an educator. His *Drum Tuning And Sound Design* video (and now DVD) was the first to approach the nebulous subject of drum tuning scientifically *and* musically. Bob has also produced videos by Dennis Chambers and Tony Royster Jr. (*Common Ground*), Billy Ashbaugh (*Takin' Care Of Business*), and Will Kennedy (*Be A DrumHead*). In addition, Bob has frequently shared his knowledge and experience with the readers of *Modern Drummer*, with articles like his November 2003 piece on building a creative environment in which to practice.

Others know Bob as an inventor. He has worked with such companies as Noble & Cooley, Evans Drumheads, and Drum Workshop to create or improve innovative products like Evans' Genera Dry drumheads, as well as the recently introduced Bow Oriented Action (B.O.A.) hingeless and spring-less bass drum and hi-hat pedals from DW's Pacific Drums & Percussion division. Bob is also the creator of his own ergonomically designed combination drum rack/throne system, the DrumFrame.

Then there's Bob the performer. He's a fine drummer, as well as a talented composer. His appearance at the 1996 *MD* Festival Weekend was impressive, and he has recorded several solid solo CDs.

These days, Bob has been devoting much of his time to a program called START With The Arts. Its goals are to promote the arts as a building block for personal growth, to foster the ability of children to develop their natural talent for idea-making, and to build partnerships between the arts and business communities.

Along with Billy Ashbaugh, Bob recently produced a DVD called *START Cookin'*, featuring Emeril Lagasse and Doc Gibbs from the popular cooking show *Emeril Live*. The DVD is the first of a four-part series that inspires children to think creatively. It establishes language and concepts, while subsequent DVD releases will present actual idea-making techniques. Bob and Billy have been "on the road," conducting classroom workshops around the country to introduce the program.

There's just no telling what this multifaceted bundle of energy will involve himself in next.

READERS POLL SUBSCRIPTION GIVEAWAY

In appreciation for the participation of *MD*'s readership in this year's poll, three ballots were drawn at random to determine the winners of a free one-year subscription to *MD*. Those winners are Rich Pastuszek of Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania, Elizabeth Soyland of Columbus, Ohio, and Chris Reed of Jacksonville, Florida. Congratulations from *Modern Drummer*!

JASON BITTNER
SHADOWS FALL
METAL & BEST RECORDED PERFORMANCE

CHRIS ADLER
LAMB OF GOD
UP & COMING; BEST RECORDED PERFORMANCE

CARTER BEAUFORD
DAVE MATTHEWS BAND
POP

MIKE PORTNOY
DREAM THEATER
PROG. ROCK & BEST RECORDED PERFORMANCE

THE READERS HAVE CHOSEN. THE CHOSEN HAVE CHOSEN.

Congratulations to the winners of the Modern Drummer Readers' Poll.

BILLY MASON
TIM MCGRAW
COUNTRY

EVELYN GLENNIE
SOLO PERCUSSIONIST
CLASSICAL/MALLET PERCUSSIONIST

ED SHAUGHNESSY
DOC SEVERINSEN BAND
BIG BAND

TERENCE HIGGINS
DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND
UP & COMING

NEIL PEART
RUSH
PROG. ROCK

TERREON GULLY
STEFON HARRIS / CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE
UP & COMING

KEITH HARRIS
BLACK EYED PEAS
HIP-HOP

JORDAN BURNS
STRUNG OUT
PUNK

STEVE FERRONE
TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS
STUDIO

TEDDY CAMPBELL
AMERICAN IDOL
POP

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First Place Winners

Vinnie Colaiuta Artist Series Drumsticks

Louie Bellson Artist Series Drumsticks

Leigh Howard Stevens Malletech® Mallets

Educational DVD	All-Around	POP	Big Band	Classical/mallet Percussionist
Billy Ward: Big Time	Vinnie Colaiuta	Carter Beauford	Louie Bellson	Leigh Howard Stevens

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THE HEART OF DRUMMING

Congratulations to all the Artists, for their accomplishments in 2004 and for sharing their musical voices with the world.

John Riley Artist Series Drumsticks

Travis Barker Artist Series Drumsticks

Bill Stewart Artist Series Drumsticks

Giovanni Hidalgo Artist Series Timbale Sticks

Educational Book	Hip-Hop	Punk	Mainstream Jazz	Hand Percussionist
John Riley: The Jazz Drummer's Workshop	Ahmir "?uestlove" Thompson	Travis Barker	Bill Stewart	Giovanni Hidalgo

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TAMA

System Of A Down's

John Dolmayan

Mesmerizing Performance

Story by Waleed Rashidi
Photos by Alex Solca

"Ever since I was a kid, I knew I was destined for *this*," says System Of A Down drummer John Dolmayan. "I used to go to shows and think, 'I'm going to be on that stage one day.' It's really easy for me to say that now, but I knew it back then. And if you talk to people who knew me back then, they'll tell you the same thing."

The "this" Dolmayan is speaking of is his place in life today as an immensely successful modern rock drummer for the multi-platinum Los Angeles-based group System Of A Down.

TAMA

Nearly four years ago, Dolmayan and his band released the Rick Rubin–produced *Toxicity*, a blistering collection of material that was anything *but* the traditional sophomore slump. It offered some of the wildest and most intriguing singles to hit modern rock airwaves in recent memory. (If you doubt this, go back and give a listen to "Chop Suey," "Aerials," and "Psycho.")

After an intense, multi-year tour schedule in support of *Toxicity*, System headed back into the recording studio last year to begin work on the follow-up to their most successful album to date. With sessions again helmed by Rubin (whose credits include Slayer, Danzig, and The Beastie Boys, among many others), Dolmayan soon found himself testing his own skills and pushing his limits—largely with incredible results. In fact, these sessions were so prolific that they yielded a double-album's worth of material, which will be broken into two separate releases, titled *Mezmerize* and *Hypnotize*.

The new music is quite a wild ride, something *Toxicity* only hinted at back in '01. For example, the intricately composed "Kill Rock 'N' Roll" catapults with an imposing tom intro, eventually breaking into some Bonham-esque kick patterns, before finally capping off with an unexpected, frenzied crash/snare sprint. And that's just one of *several* examples of Dolmayan's impressive kit work on the new releases.

Most drummers would've given up a dozen bars into a composition as involved and demanding as the aforementioned one—or frankly, just about anything in System Of A Down's repertoire. But Dolmayan's tenacious spirit, coupled with a thirst for constant learning, has molded the drummer into a world-class, albeit rather humble, hard rock powerhouse. "Believe me," he says, "if there was no

System Of A Down, I'd still be trying."

MD: How did the sessions for the new albums differ from those for *Toxicity*?

John: I think the major difference between

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this session and the *Toxicity* session is that we did this one at Rick's house instead of a traditional studio, which made a big difference in how the drums sound, which drums were used, and especially what snares were used. I used a completely different setup. I kind of accommodated my playing style to the music that was being written.

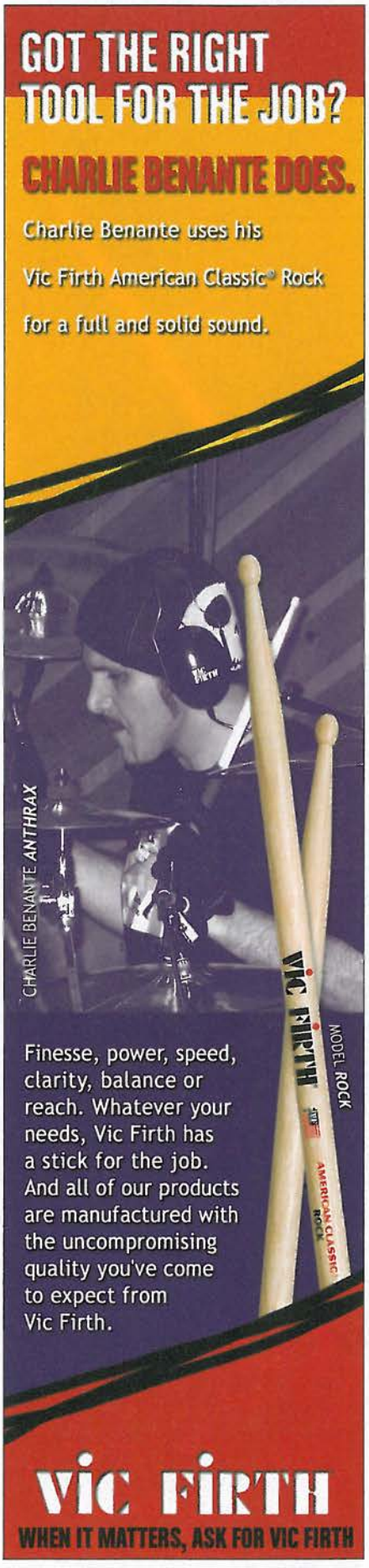
The recording process this time took considerably longer. Last time I did my drums in six days, but this time I didn't have that luxury because we weren't finished with pre-production when we went in. The last time, I had three weeks of playing the songs every day, kind of like preparing for a show, except we were

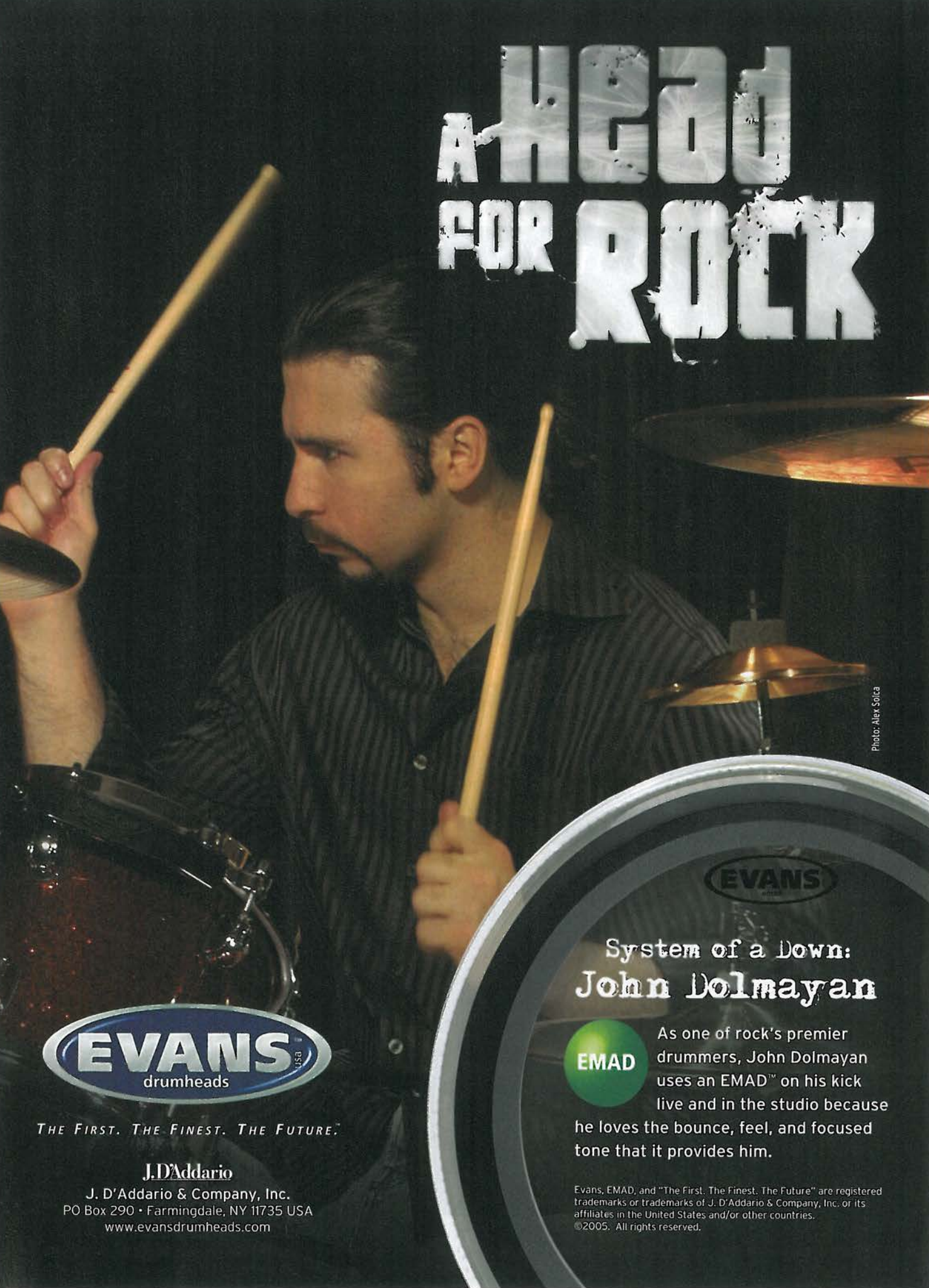
System Drums

Drums: Tama Starclassic
- **A.** 18x18 floor tom
- **B.** 4x6 LP mini-timbale (not shown in photo)
- **C.** 4x8 LP mini-timbale (not shown in photo)
- **D.** 6½x14 bell brass snare
- **E.** 9x10 tom
- **F.** 10x12 tom
- **G.** 12x14 tom
- **H.** 16x16 floor tom
- **I.** 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Paiste
1. 14" Signature medium hi-hats
2. 22" medium China
3. 18" Signature Power crash
4. 8" Signature splash
5. 20" Signature Full crash
6. 10" Signature splash
7. 18" Signature Full crash
8. 22" Dimension Mega-Bell ride
9. 24" 2002 ride
10. 18" heavy China on top of 22" Dimension power crash
11. 6" bell chime
12. 8" bell chime

Hardware: Tama, including their Iron Cobra pedals (medium spring tension)
Heads: Evans Rock AF on snare drum batter with Hazy 300 underneath (tuned not too tight, minimal gaffer's tape for muffling), coated G2s on tops of toms with clear G1s underneath. EMADs on bass drum batters with EQ3s on fronts (Evans EQ Pads for muffling in each drum)
Sticks: Vic Firth custom model (similar to 5B, with wood tip)

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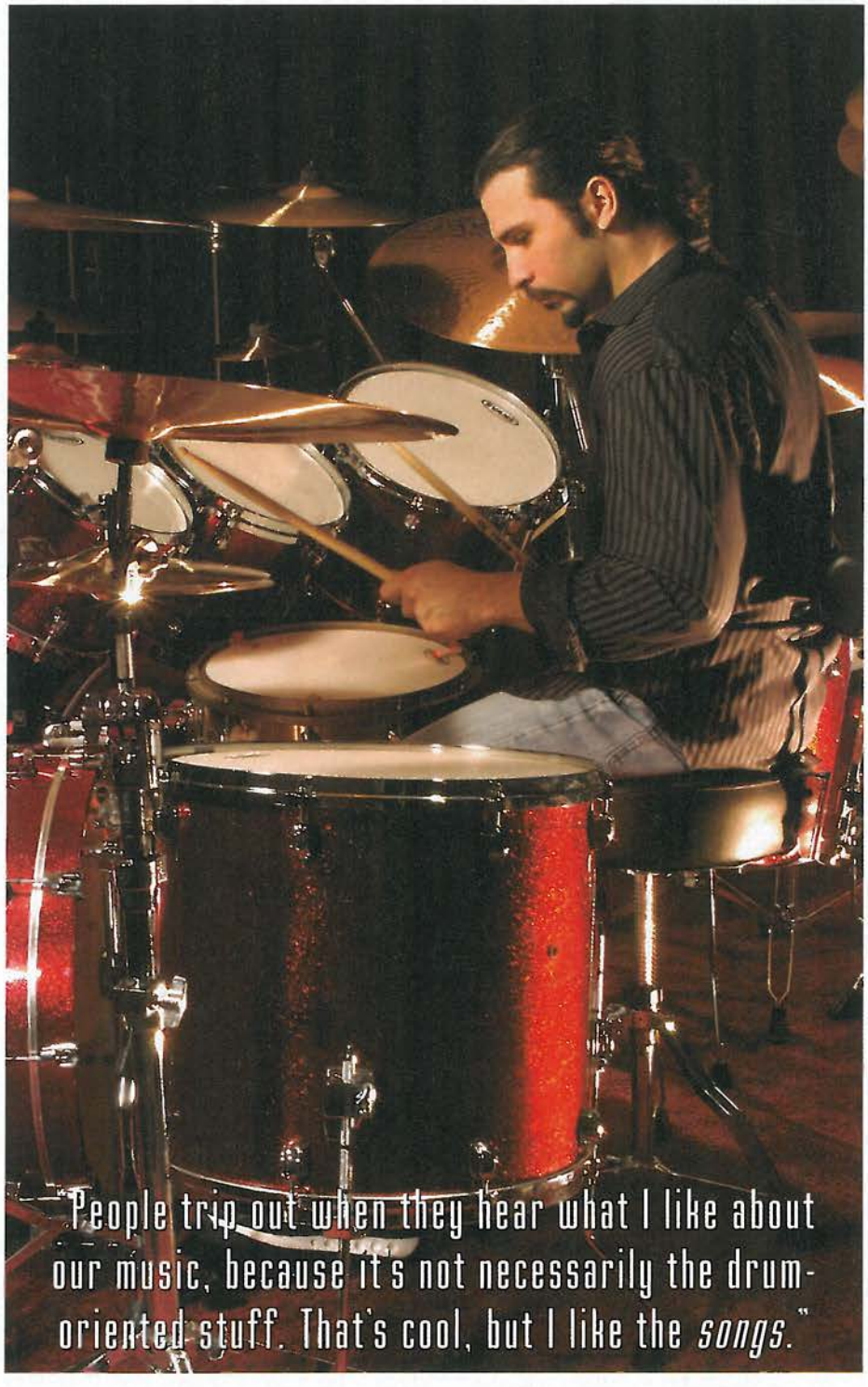
preparing to record. This time, we were still doing pre-production. We'd bring in a song, Rick would go over it, and then we'd try to play it the best we could. Then we'd have to re-write certain parts. So it was a much slower process. In the end, I think that both ways worked well. The sessions for *Toxicity* worked really well, because that's where we were at. But for these new albums, we had to take a totally different approach because it's totally different music.

MD: What was your drum setup this time around?

John: The configuration was different; I used two actual kick drums, which was interesting because I'd never done that before. It's like jumping into someone else's bed; it's still a bed but you've got to get used to it.

MD: Was that a feel thing or was it more of a sound issue?



"People trip out when they hear what I like about our music, because it's not necessarily the drum-oriented stuff. That's cool, but I like the *songs*."

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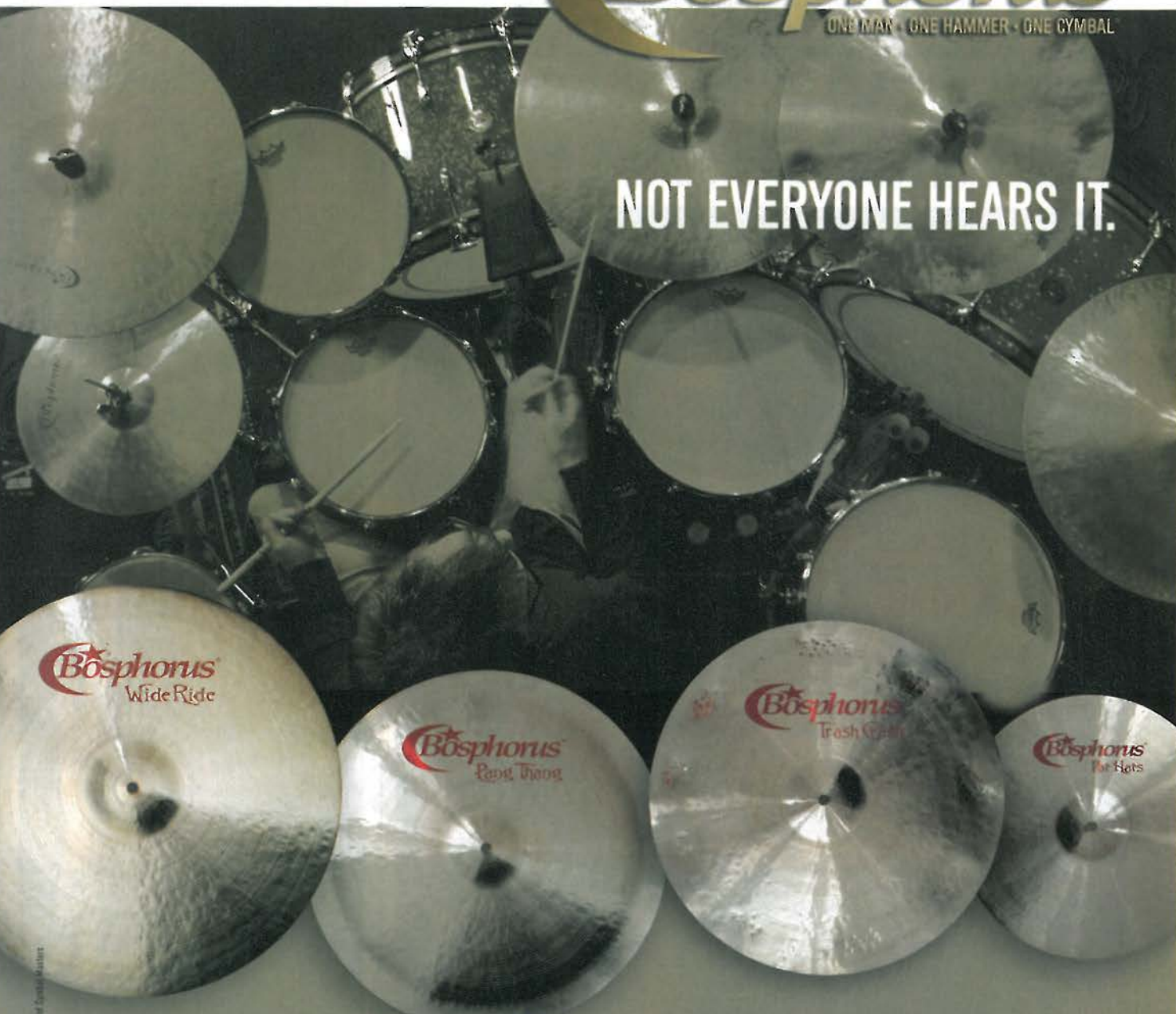

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John: Well, I never really considered myself much of a double bass player. I've always concentrated more on my hands than on my feet. Unfortunately for me, or actually *fortunately* for me, the new music called for more double bass stuff. It forced me to get into a different area. And I felt that two bass drums would sound better tone-wise than a single drum with a double pedal, so I switched to two.

MD: How much involvement did Rick have on your drums?

John: Rick had a lot of good suggestions, and I left it up to him and Daron [Malakian, System Of A Down guitarist] to help me select my snare drums. A drum will sound one way to me since I'm on top of it, but it will sound totally different in the control room. So I collaborated with them and we came up with some really cool sounds.

MD: Your snare has a very different vibe than the drum you played on *Toxicity*.

John: It's a wood snare, as opposed to last time, when I used a bell brass.

MD: Yes, the *Toxicity* snare seemed much drier, as opposed to what you have nowadays, which sounds meatier and thicker.

John: You're going to get that with a wood snare. Also, the room had a lot to do with the sound. Plus you have to take into consideration that the music is significantly different. We always like to think it maintains a lot of the characteristics of System Of A Down, which it has to, since it's us playing. But I think the music has grown in a lot of ways and it's a lot more diverse.

We're always trying to outdo what we did in the past. So in order for that to happen, you have to make changes in your sound and you have to grow with the music. So we needed something that had a little more depth to it and had a warmer sound, and I think we accomplished that with the wood snare.

MD: Will you be using this new configuration on stage?

John: Yes. It's a Tama Starclassic kit, which sounds great. Starclassics always sound really good, man, especially live. As for the snare drum I'll use on stage, I'm thinking about the bell brass.

MD: What's your cymbal setup?

John: I use Paiste cymbals, mostly from their Signature line, but with a couple of Dimensions in there as well. I've got some

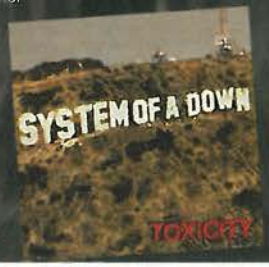
Down With That

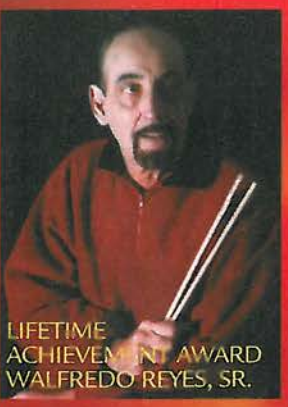
Dolmayan's best recordings:

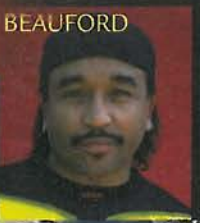
Artist	Album
System Of A Down	Mezmerize
System Of A Down	Hypnotize
System Of A Down	Steal This Album
System Of A Down	Toxicity
System Of A Down	System Of A Down

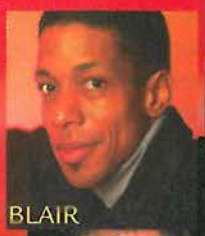
His faves:

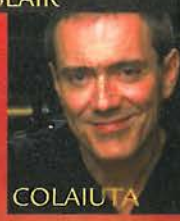
Artist	Album	Drummer
The Who	Quadrophenia	Keith Moon
Maynard Ferguson	Carnival	Peter Erskine, Bob Economou
Al Di Meola	Elegant Gypsy	Lenny White, Steve Gadd
Led Zeppelin	Led Zeppelin IV	John Bonham
Rush	Hemispheres	Neil Peart
The Dickies	Killer Klowns From Outer Space	Jerry Angel, Cliff Martinez
Fishbone	Truth And Soul	Phillip "Fish" Fisher

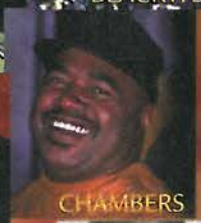












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big cymbals, 24s and 22s. And the bell on my 22" Dimension Mega-Bell ride is almost the same size as my old ride! But the Mega-Bell sounds great and really cuts through.

MD: You had mentioned that the studio had a lot to do with your sound on the new recordings. What was that room like?

John: I'm sure people are familiar with it; it's where The Red Hot Chili Peppers recorded, which is Rick's house. It's just basically a living room that we draped a big American flag on top of, with wood floors and old, concrete walls. It's supposedly a haunted house. I stuck around late at night waiting for something to happen, but I didn't see anything. I guess nobody wanted to haunt me! [laughs]

MD: These new songs sound like a more extreme version of what you did on *Toxicity*. How would you summarize the differences between the old material and the new?

John: There are a lot of differences. On our first album, we had a lot of trepidation going into the studio. We were nervous and didn't know what was going to happen, but we accomplished a lot. The second album was *Toxicity*, and we did those tracks and *Steal [This Album]* during the same period, so you can kind of say we were a little more seasoned, but we weren't a hundred percent comfortable. This time it was like, "Okay, let's *record*." There wasn't that apprehension and nervousness that took place before.

We were very comfortable this time, and when you're comfortable, things flow. And when things flow, different things are more likely to come out. On *Toxicity*, I think I was a bit nervous, so my playing was a little more reserved than it normally would be. Now that I listen to it, I wish I had done certain fills and things, just to enhance the songs. But I wouldn't change anything I did on *Toxicity*, because at the time that's what I needed for that album.

MD: Where does your signature manic playing style originate?

John: Manic music desires manic playing.

MD: Okay, where does the manic music originate?

John: That would be Daron Malakian. [Singer] Serj Tankian is into making some pretty manic stuff too. And I think [bassist] Shavo Odadjian's music is more reminiscent of the *Toxicity* style, a lot of groove-oriented stuff. Serj's stuff is probably the most manic, and it takes the most amount of work.

MD: What's your role in the creation process of System Of A Down's music?

John: I look at my job as being the backbone of the band, making sure the soloists have something to play on top of, something that's solid and that gives the bass as much help with the tempo as possible. There's so much happening in our music that you have to mastermind it all and make sure it's in time and it's neat. Otherwise, it's going to be a big mess.

MD: Are there any exercises that you do to help maintain your agility?

John: No, that's something I should work on more. I just play. I do play with different people. I think that's key. When I was learning how to play drums, I spent a *lot* of time playing to albums. I think that's where I developed my playing style.

MD: Did you incorporate your double bass skills from the start?

John: If you listen to our first album, there's very little double bass, because I sucked at it. [laughs] I'm better now, but I feel like I'm really just entering that whole world. It's hard to teach an old dog new tricks, but I'm working on it.

MD: It seems more prevalent on your latest recordings.

John: Well, my guitarist has introduced me to a lot of music that I really wasn't that aware of, a lot of black metal, which features double bass. I was never in that world. I don't think I listened to it with the right ear back then, either. It was just noise to me. But when I hear those drummers, I mean, dude, that's why I don't consider myself to be a double bass player. When you hear those guys, it's like a million miles a second. I can't do that yet. I may never be able to do that. But I'm working on it.

MD: With so much happening during any one of your songs, how cautious are you about not overplaying or underplaying?

John: I'm very aware of that. I think the song is much more than my drumming. I consider myself to be in a supportive role; I support the song. I think all four of us support the song, and that's more important. I attempt not to overplay. Let's put it this way: I do a lot of self-editing. Most of the parts that I come up with, I come up with in a few seconds. And then it gets

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fine-tuned as we go along. As we fine-tune things, Rick has a good way of keeping me grounded so that I don't overplay. He'll tell me, "Look, it makes this part sound messy," and I'll be like, "Okay, what can we do to fix it?" It's not like what I play is perfection. It's a constant work in progress.

MD: How hands-on is Rick as a producer?

John: He's *very* hands-on when it comes to two things: drums and vocals.

Let me tell you a funny story. There was one song called "Revenga," which is one of my favorites. When Daron brought it in, there was this drum part that I came up with that I thought was really cool. I was doing kind of a disco hi-hat beat, 4/4 on the kick, but I was playing a Latin thing on the ride cymbal at the same time.

Well, everybody in the band hated that part, but I loved it. They were like, "Can't you do something else?" So I used a little trickery. I said, "Okay," and did something else. Two weeks later, when they forgot, I started playing that part again and nobody noticed! [laughs] The first time I did it again, I looked around, but nobody was giving me any dirty looks, so I kept doing it. And when Rick heard it, he loved it! He went nuts for it. He was like, "That's it! That's the best thing you've ever done!"

So we ended up doing it, and it sounded good. In the end, everybody liked the part. I think they even forgot that they didn't like it! Of course, on the flip side, there's stuff I've played that I thought was great and couldn't live without, that now I'm like, "Man, why was I even thinking about playing that?" But overall, it's a big help to work with guys who offer an opinion. And I try to be very open to their suggestions.

MD: You were mentioning earlier about how your parts were constructed rather quickly.

John: I don't have the luxury of a lot of time. After someone works on something for a long time, they don't want to wait two or three weeks for their drummer to come up with something. I'll usually have about ten to fifteen minutes to come up with a basic idea.

MD: How quick are you to scrap a part?

John: As quick as I am to come up with something, I'm just as quick to dump it. It's my job to quickly come up with something that will work. After that, I can fine-tune a part, but I need to put down the basic idea so that all of the other parts can come together.

MD: Let's talk about some of the new songs. "Cigaro" is a track where you have some really extreme blast beats going on.

John: I've never done that before, and I wasn't happy about it at first. Daron made the suggestion, but I thought, "I don't play that way." It was too fast. But Daron gave me some examples of that stuff to listen to. I checked them out and got a feel for it. You can't always do everything—but you can try. And eventually if you work hard enough, you'll be able to do it.

MD: "B.Y.O.B." seems like it's more of a punk-based track.

John: It's punk-based, but it's also got double bass and blast beats in it. It's got a bit of everything in it.

MD: And it has that half-time part that's almost "dancey," with the open hi-hat and tambourines.

John: System Of A Down!

MD: Whose suggestion was it to break into the dance beat?

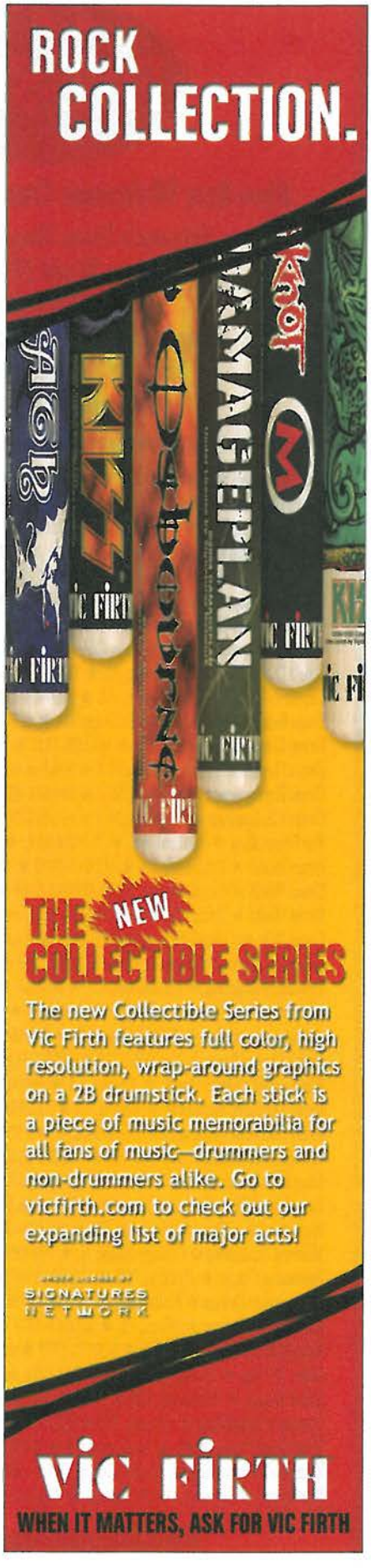
John: The blast beat stuff was kind of inherent in that music. I knew that the vibe was there for that kind of part. So I just took what I did in the past and arranged it so I could work in that dance beat. It's a feel thing. There's a certain bounce to it that has to be there. If I did a straight-four beat, it wouldn't work. That part needed a disco beat.

MD: "Hypnotize" is a slower, building song, much like "Aerials." There seems to be some hand percussion in the breakdown.

John: That's one of my favorite songs. I got some LP mini-timbales. They're made of brass and I just played them with a stick. But they were far away from my kit and the mic's when I was playing them, so it gave a far away feel. But it does sound like hand percussion.

I like that song a lot because it reminds me of The Who's "Baba O'Riley." People trip out when they hear what I like about our music, because it's not necessarily the drum-oriented material. That's cool, but I like the *songs*. That song gives me chills. It's pretty heavy stuff and it makes you feel something.

MD: "Question" has this assaulting intro that leads into a Stewart Copeland-ish cross-stick bit.



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John Dolmayan

John: That song was no piece of cake. It was one that didn't come together quickly. In fact, it took us three days. The timing on that one is odd.

MD: Yeah, what *is* the meter on that tune?

John: I don't know. I don't have my abacus with me right now. [laughs] Actually, nobody in the band knows either. We've been trying to figure it out. I even asked my dad, who's a musician, and he was like, "I don't know." I'm sure someone will figure it out. Basically, the meters change in the tune.

MD: So how do you count it?

John: I don't. I just play, bro. I don't visualize. If you start thinking, you're going to have a lot of mess-ups. Any time I've messed up live, it's because I was too inside the music and thinking too much. I try not to think like that when I'm playing. And I certainly don't *ever* count while I'm playing.

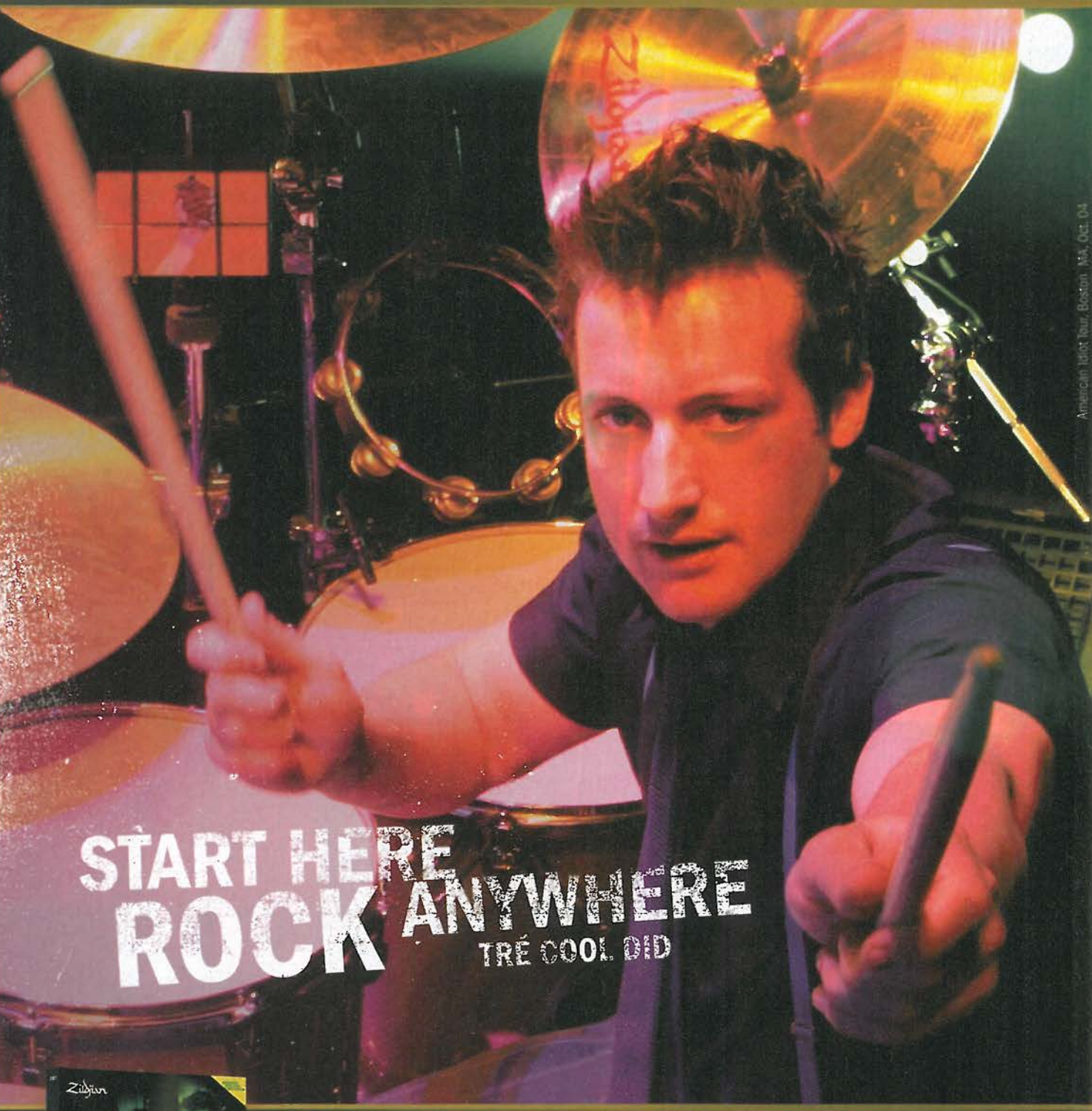
But I'll tell you, the first couple of days we worked on that song was like pulling teeth. We couldn't figure out the time. "Man, this is not working. Why isn't it working?" We had to really address it. It took us about three days to get the feel. Now it doesn't sound like that hard of a song to play. I think when people listen to it they'll be like, "Oh, what's the big deal?" Well, try playing it.

MD: Do you ever find yourself competing against yourself?

John: Always, every time I get on stage. A lot of those kids in the audience have seen me before, and I don't want them to think, "Oh, he's not quite as good as he was last time." I want them to be like, "Man, he blew me away last time. I didn't think he could get any better, but he did."

I'm not saying that I never have off days, but I really do make an attempt at every gig to play at the best of my ability and to really go for it. Those kids that bought tickets to see us play deserve the best show possible. And that's really the mantra of our band. We don't go out there and mess around. We're out there to blow the audience away every night.

To hear John Dolmayan and System Of A Down, tune in to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.



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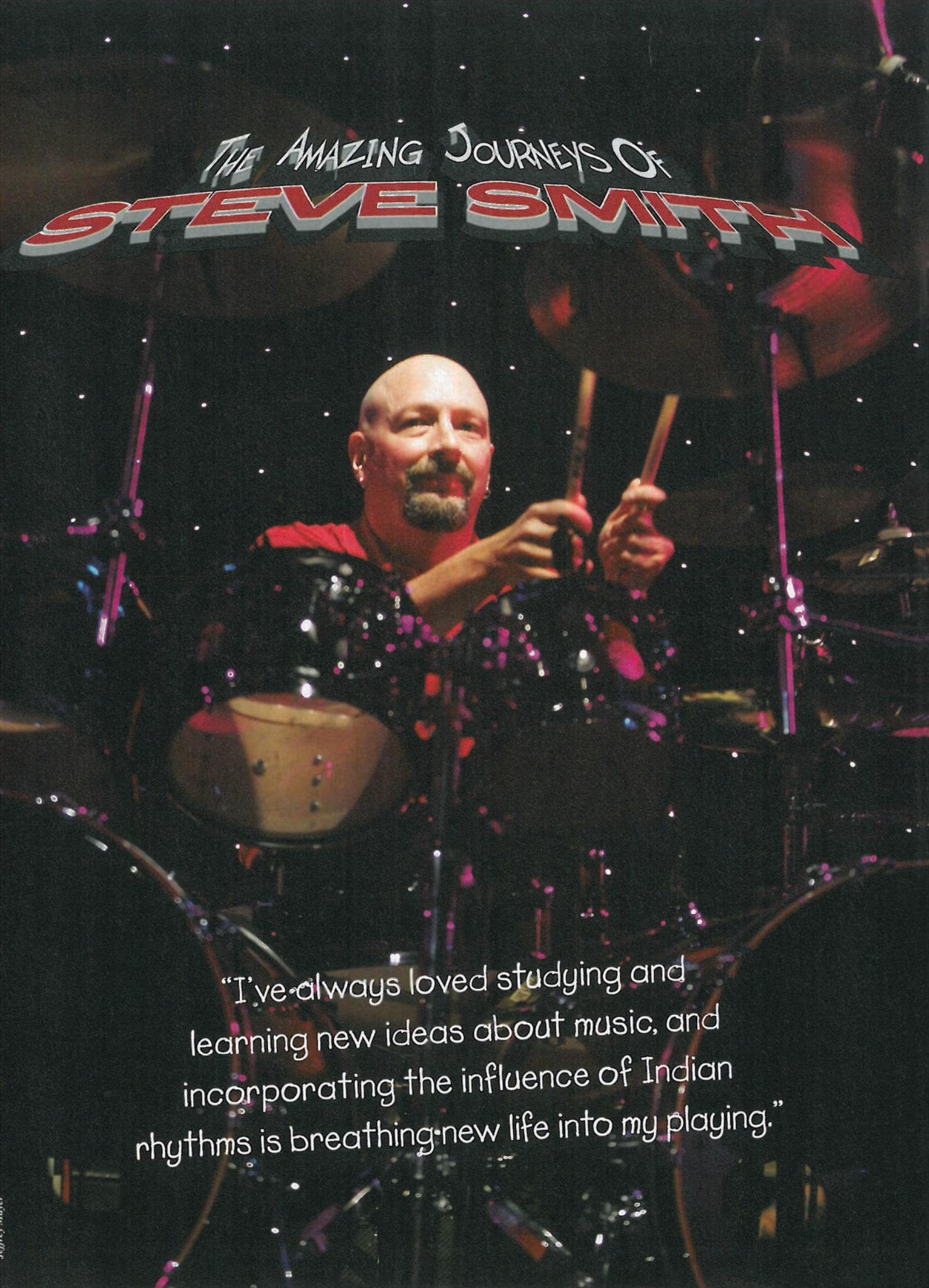


"I've always loved studying and learning new ideas about music, and incorporating the influence of Indian rhythms is breathing new life into my playing."

Over the past thirty years, it's no exaggeration to say that Steve Smith has had an incredible career—from the heights of pop-rock success with Journey, to becoming an acknowledged master of the instrument, to performing with his own group, Vital Information, as well as many other jazz greats. That said, earlier this year Steve experienced one of the most interesting three-week stretches any musician has ever had. What follows is Steve's travel diary during that time, in his own words.

Steve with star

Full Journey lineup

In my life as a musician, I've had many unique and interesting experiences. But I'd have to say, the events of the past couple of weeks have been unprecedented in their diversity and intensity.

Friday, January 21. At 12:00 noon, Journey was presented with a star on Hollywood Boulevard in Hollywood, California. It was great to see all of the members of Journey again and to catch up with them. Neal Schon, Ross Valory, Jonathan Cain, and Steve Perry were all there, as well as past and present members George Tickner, Aynsley Dunbar, Robert Fleishman, Deen Castronovo, and Steve Augeri.

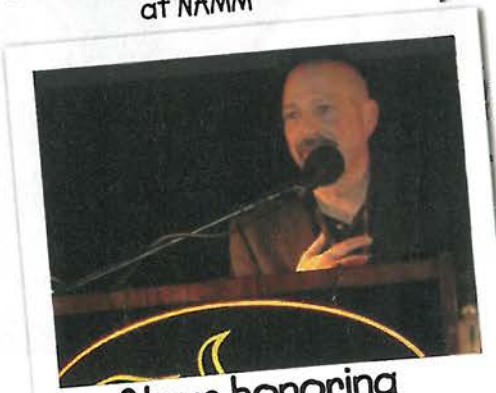
I was amazed at the turnout. Over one thousand fans attended the event and cheered as the mayor of Hollywood gave a speech and unveiled the star. Journey had a gig at the Hollywood House Of Blues that night, and I was invited to sit in with the band. So after lunch we all went to the HOB for a soundcheck/rehearsal.

I haven't listened to or played any Journey tunes in about nine years, so I couldn't remember the ones they asked me to play. Deen reminded me of some of the parts, and then they came back to me. I played "Walks Like A Lady" and "Chain Reaction," and then we really stretched out on the Jimi Hendrix tunes "Voodoo Chile" and "Third Stone From The Sun." Aynsley Dunbar also sat in on a couple of tunes and played great. And Deen Castronovo, who played most of the night, sounded *amazing*—playing drums and singing many of the lead vocals! I enjoyed jamming with the band and hanging with everyone.

Freddie Gruber, Peter Erskine, Steve Smith, and Steve Gadd at NAMM

Saturday, January 22 was an extremely busy day at the Anaheim NAMM show [National Association Of Music Merchants]. I had commitments to sign autographs at the Sonor and Vic Firth booths. I then went to an afternoon soundcheck at the Coast Anaheim Hotel to prepare for that evening's Vital Information concert sponsored by Gallien-Krueger, the amplifier company that our bass player, Baron Browne, endorses.

One of the highlights of the day was speaking at the party Zildjian gave in honor of the eightieth birthdays of Louie Bellson, Roy Haynes, and Earl Palmer. I was in heavy company when, first, Steve Gadd got up and spoke, I went next, then Peter Erskine, and finally Freddie Gruber. It was a great honor for me to thank Louie,



Steve honoring drumming legends

Roy, and Earl for their years of inspiration as great musicians, innovators, bandleaders, and examples of drummers with long and influential careers. I wanted to hang, but I had to run to another hotel for my gig with Vital Information. I just made the 10:00 P.M. downbeat!

Playing at NAMM is always inspiring. The band tends to play a little harder, knowing that the audience is 99% musicians!

Sunday, January 23 was an easier day at NAMM. I had an autograph session at Sonor again, this time with fellow endorser Thomas Lang. At a later autograph session at the Remo booth, I met the great Scottish rudimental drummer Jim Kilpatrick, who gave me a jaw-dropping display of his chops. Of course, I had him show me some of his stickings and cool moves.

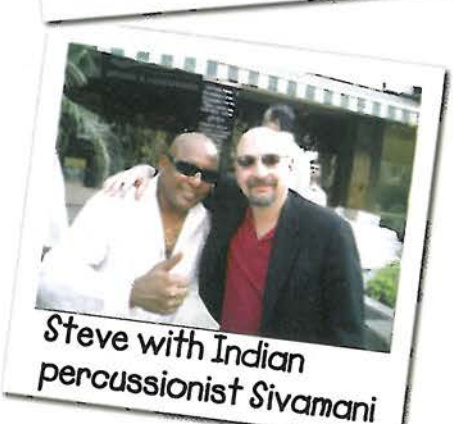
I visited a lot of the booths and said hi to some friends I hadn't seen in a while. The evening ended with Diane, my partner, and I joining Rob Wallis and Paul Seigel from Hudson Music, along with Thomas Lang, for a relaxed dinner.

Monday, January 24 was a travel day for the members of Vital Information. Tom Coster [keyboards], Frank Gambale

The "hang" at NAMM: Steve, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Jeff Hamilton, and Stanton Moore

VI at the new Catalinas

arriving in Mumbai



Steve with Indian percussionist Sivamani

With mridangist Sridar Pakthasarthy...

...Selvaganesh...

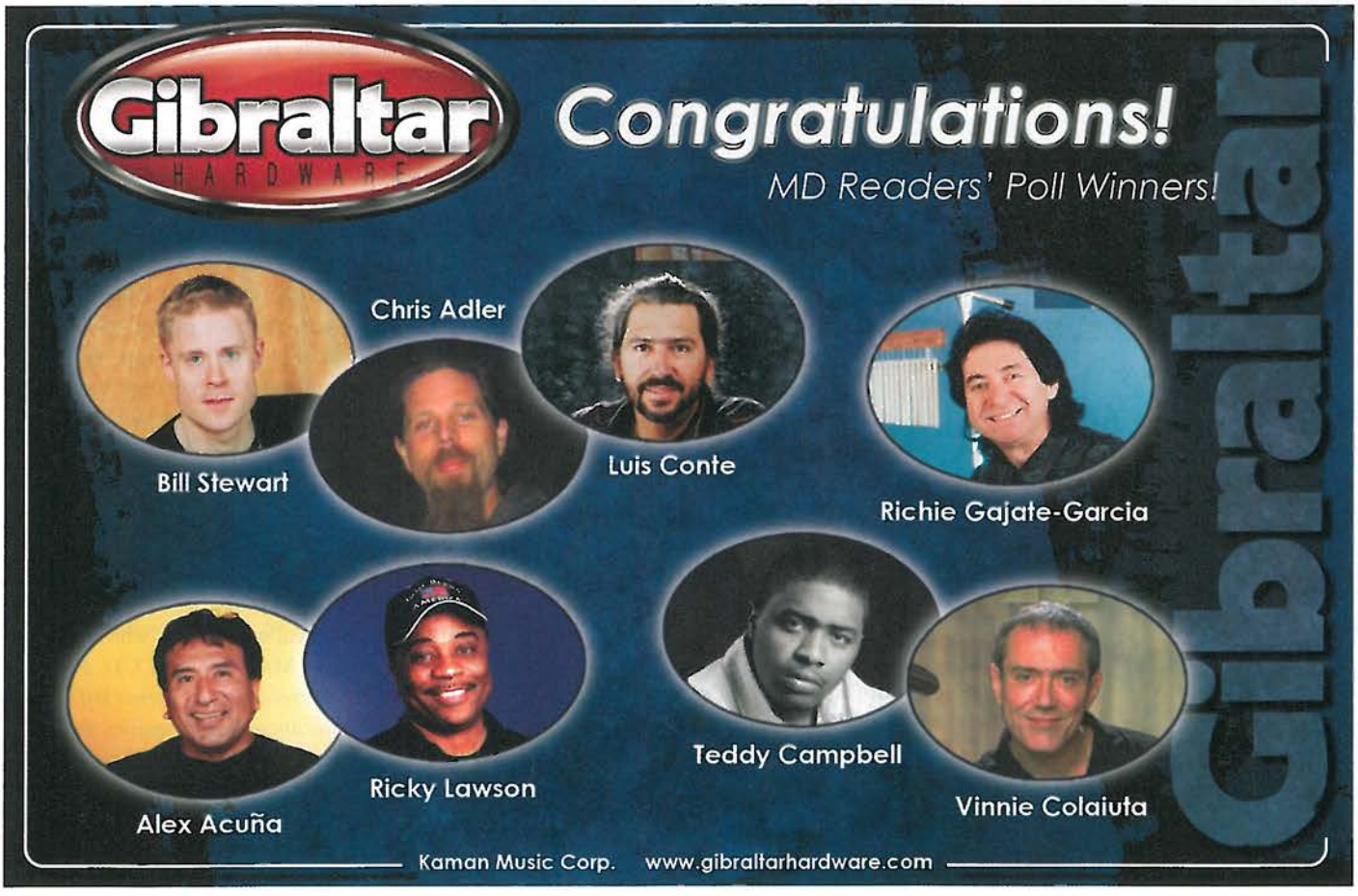
...Zakir Hussain...

...and John McLaughlin

[guitar], Baron Browne [bass], and I took a short drive from Anaheim to Hollywood to check into our hotel prior to our engagement at the beautiful Catalina's Bar & Grill jazz club.

Tuesday, January 25 through Sunday, January 30. Vital Information played for a week at Catalina's. Playing in one club for a series of nights usually leads to enhanced creativity, because we're well-rested each night. It's the opposite of what life on the road is usually like, where you're doing a series of one-nighters. Normally, each day features an early wakeup, long travel, hotel check-in, unloading of the van, set up, soundcheck, playing the gig, and then tearing the gear down and packing the van—only to do it all again the next day.

During the week at Catalina's, I had the pleasure of playing for some of the top drummers in the world. On **Tuesday, January 25**, Jeff Hamilton, Richie Garcia, Danny Carey, and Sonor artist relations manager Milan Goltz came down for our opening night. On **Thursday, January 27**, the vibe was electric, as Vic Firth artist relations director Marco Soccoli came to the club with an amazing group, including Gregg Bissonette, Myron Grombacher and his son Dylan, Todd Lane, Slim Jim Phantom [Stray Cats], Danny Carey, Ricky Lawson, Ndugu Leon Chancler, Steve Sidelnyk [Madonna], Tommy Igoe [*The Lion King*], Zoro, Brenden Buckley [Shakira], Alicia Warrington [Kelly Osbourne], Jen Lowe [Jason Mraz], Nick Barker [Dimmu Borgir], Dino Cavares [Fear Factory], Chris Antonopoulos [Opiate For The Masses], Bobby Jarzombek [Iced Earth, Halford], Mike Fasano [Dad's Porno Mag], Bruce Jacoby, Chris Delisa, Chris Stankee, Walter Earl, and Carmine



Appice, who brought guitarist Pat Travers with him. My friend Richie Garcia was also there with his son.

Playing for fellow drummers can sometimes be intimidating. But the vibe that everyone put out was very positive and open. It helped me get into a special zone where I wanted to play my best. Then the entire band just took off, playing with a freedom that was effortless.

Sunday, January 30 completed the week. My friend and drum guru, Freddie Gruber, came down for the final set, stayed late, and had us all roaring with laughter at his stories.

Monday, January 31. I had an afternoon flight out of LAX that landed in Frankfurt, Germany in the early hours of **Tuesday, February 1**. After a three-hour layover, I left for Mumbai [Bombay], India, where I arrived on **Wednesday, February 2** at 1:30 A.M. The day was spent preparing my drums for a concert the next day.

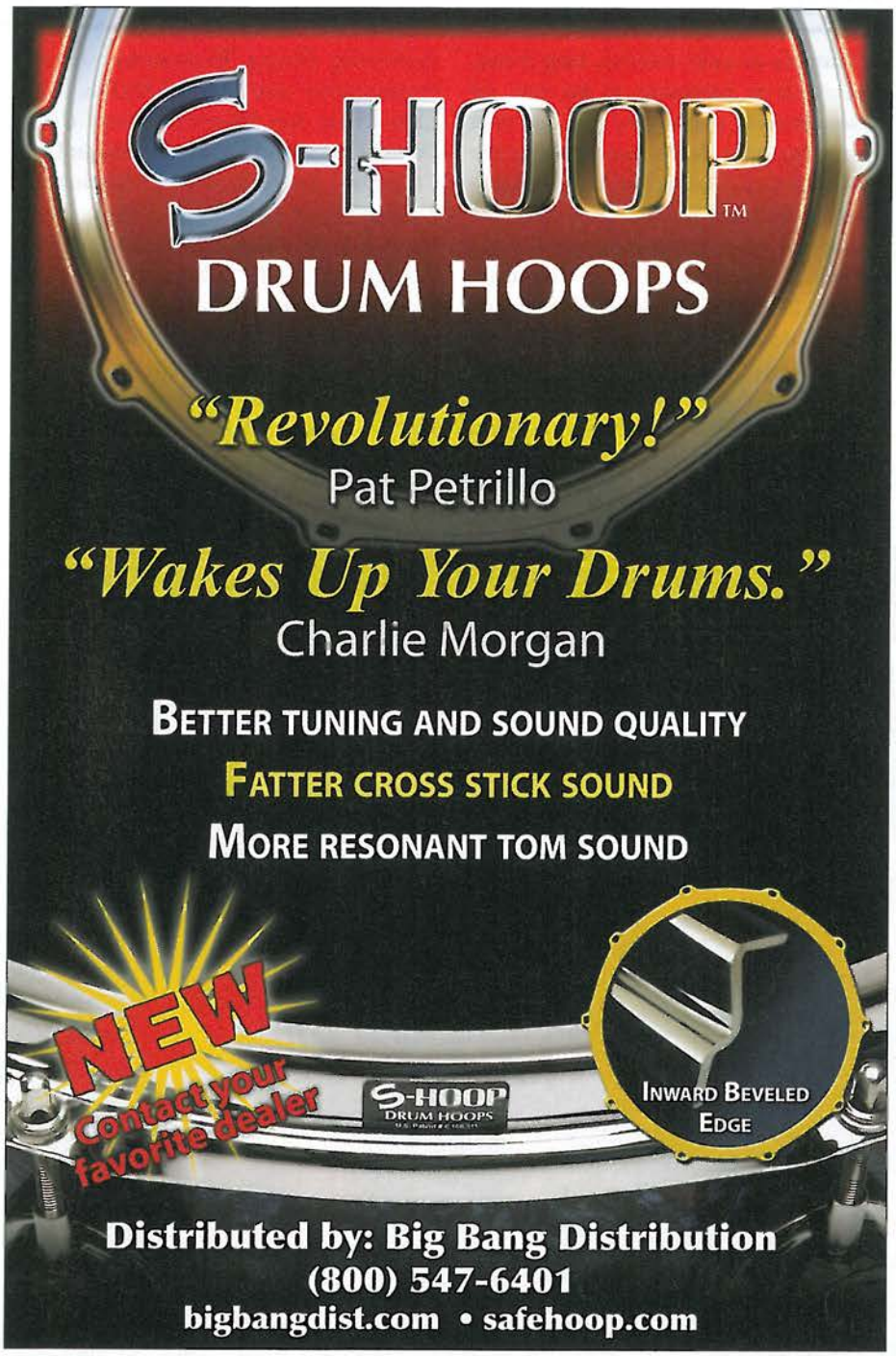
Ranjit Barot is one of the top drumset players in India, and last year I helped hook him up with a new Sonor Jungle Set, which I ended up borrowing for this concert. I spent a few hours at Ranjit's state-of-the-art recording studio, putting new heads on the kit and setting it up to my specs. I was ably assisted by Ranjit's student, Darshan Doshi, who became my assistant, driver, and student during my stay in India.

Let me back up for a minute and let you know *why* I traveled to India. At the end of December, Zakir Hussain called and invited me to perform at an event that he holds in Mumbai every February 3. The event is called An Homage To Abbaji, Abbaji being the great tabla maestro Ustad Allarakha, Zakir's father.

Most people are familiar with the tabla, a set of two drums—one high pitched (called the "tabla") and one low ("bayan"). It's the main drum of North India. Ustad Allarakha was one of the greatest tabla players who ever lived. He toured and recorded for years with Ravi Shankar. (Some drummers may recall the 1968 recording *Rich Alla Rakha*, where Buddy Rich and Allarakha went head-to-head in the studio.) Allarakha's son, Zakir Hussain, is not only the greatest tabla player of all time, but I believe him to be the greatest living drummer of our time.

Many of the great drummers of India have performed at the Homage To Abbaji event over the five years it's been held, since the untimely death of Allarakha. For me, a Western drumset player, to be asked to perform was a great honor. Giovanni Hidalgo and Pete Lockett are two other Westerners who have performed at the event in past years.

I've been studying Indian rhythms for the past four years. During this time I've had the chance to play concerts with many fantastic Indian musicians. In fact, Zakir and I have been playing together in an Indian/jazz fusion group called Summit, which you can hear on the Magna Carta CD *Modern Drummer Presents Drum Nation Vol. 1*. The more I learn about Indian music, the more respect I have for it and for Indian musicians' extreme knowledge and treatment of rhythm.



Thursday, February 3 got off to an early start with the morning session taking place from 6:30 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. Zakir's younger brother, Taufiq Qureshi, had the students of the Allarakha Institute Of Music performing together on a piece that he composed. Then there was a beautiful set with Ustad Rashid Khan on vocals, accompanied by Yogesh Samsi on tabla.

The second session started at 10:30 A.M. with a performance by Zakir Hussain himself, with Ustad Sultan Khan accompanying him on the sarangi, a stringed instrument that's played with a bow. I've seen Zakir play many times in our fusion concerts around the world, but I'd never seen him in a classical setting. Nothing could have prepared me for it. Also, he was playing in India to an audience of 3,000 fans—and a front row that included many of the top musicians of India. Zakir and Sultan Khan played for ninety minutes without a break, and it was the best I've ever heard Zakir play.

In the classical setting, Ustad Sultan Khan played a repeating figure that Zakir soloed over. Tabla soloing is a combination of composition and improvisation, in a way similar to jazz. The improvisation would build to a peak and then Zakir would finish a section with a beautifully composed tehai—a rhythmic figure that repeats three times and then resolves to beat 1.

VI taking a bow in Russia

Another device Zakir used is called a chakradar, which is a composition that is a tehai within a tehai. The entire composition is played three times before it resolves to 1. The elaborate tehais and chakradars that Zakir played were intricate and unpredictable, but were always perfectly composed and executed, resolving at beat 1 in a way that would make the entire audience gasp with disbelief.

After a long section of tabla solo, Ustad Sultan Kahn would make a short improvisation and Zakir would accompany him. Then Zakir would take over for another long solo excursion. The tabla masters in the front row were all keeping track of the tala, which is the beat cycle, or what we in the Western world call the time signature. They were amazed at the complexity, symmetry, and beauty of Zakir's improvisations, compositions, and flawless execution. This is drumming at the highest level of art and soul.

The soulfulness of Ustad Sultan Khan's accompaniment, combined with Zakir's breathtaking soloing, created some of the most beautiful and exciting music I have ever experienced. At one point, I was so overwhelmed with emotion that tears flowed from my eyes for at least five minutes. Amazing.

At 12:00 noon, mridangam maestro Dr. T. K. Murthy performed an incredible set in the South Indian carnatic style. He displayed a mastery and knowledge of rhythms that would baffle most Western drummers. Such rhythmic devices as metric modulations, implied metric modulation, rhythmic illusions, and beat displacement that Western drummers have been experimenting with in the past few years

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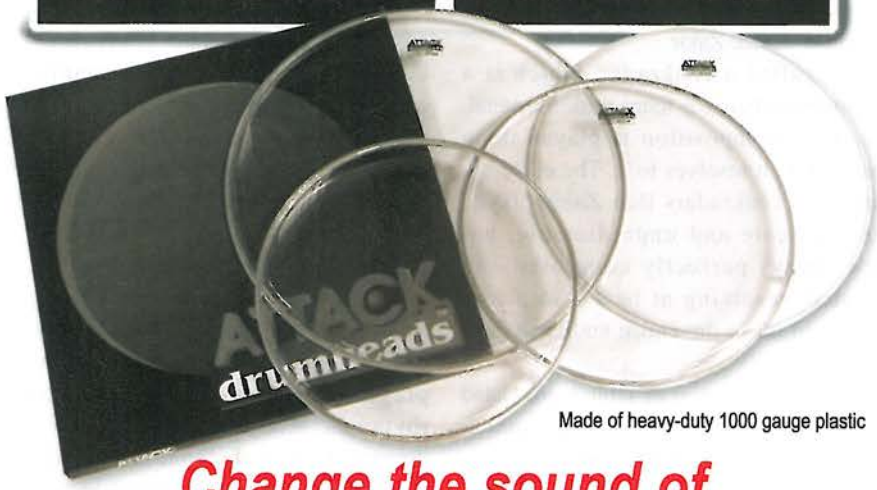

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have been a part of the basic knowledge and abilities of South Indian drummers for centuries. They take it *much* further than we can imagine. (I'm hoping to write a series of articles on this for *MD*.)

At 1:30 P.M., Ustad Gulam Zaffar Khan performed a set on a North Indian drum called a dholak. This is a folk instrument that isn't usually played in a virtuosic manner. But Ustad Gulam Zaffar Khan has taken the instrument to new heights.

From 3:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M., I closed out the second session. I started with a snare drum and a pair of brushes, humming a twelve-bar blues to accompany myself. I explained to the audience that I would represent the drumming of the US, that our percussion instrument is the drumset with the snare drum being its heart, and that our most basic song form is the blues.

After opening on the snare drum, I moved to the drumset for an extended solo that was partly composed and partly improvised. I started with Max Roach's drumset composition in 3/4, "The Drum Also Waltzes," then metrically modulated into 4/4 to play some of my own theme-and-variation compositions. I also included a short section of call-and-response between my voice and my feet on the double pedal. I've been studying the South Indian rhythmic vocal language called konakol, which uses rhythmic syllables to create complete rhythmic phrases. I felt a little intimidated doing this for the Indian audience, but I went for it anyway, and they responded positively.

I ended my drumset solo with some well-known South Indian rhythmic compositions called "korvais," which I've adapted to the drumset. I closed my portion of the concert by bringing just my hi-hat to the front of the stage and playing a hi-hat solo that included a few stick tricks.

The audience seemed to appreciate my efforts. Still, I couldn't help feeling inadequate next to the other musicians. When I'm in my own world of Western drumset players, I feel comfortable and at home. But in the company of the drummers of India, I truly felt like a beginner. I'm overwhelmed by their dedication to rhythmic knowledge and their virtuosic command of their instruments. On the other hand, I'm flattered to say that the people showed me a lot of respect—especially the young drumset players who touched my feet and

bowed to me, the way they treat the Indian masters. I was moved by their generosity.

After I played, there was a break in the program. My new friend Sivamani, one of the top percussionists of India, took me to a local music store and bought me a ghatam as a gift. The ghatam is a South Indian clay pot drum that I'm very interested in, and the one that Sivamani gave me sounds fantastic. He and I proceeded to jam in the store for over an hour, which was a lot of fun.

We returned to the concert hall, where at 7:45 P.M. the Manipuri Jagoi Marup opened the evening session. The Manipuri Jagoi Marup are six men who perform folk dances while playing on drums that hang around their necks.

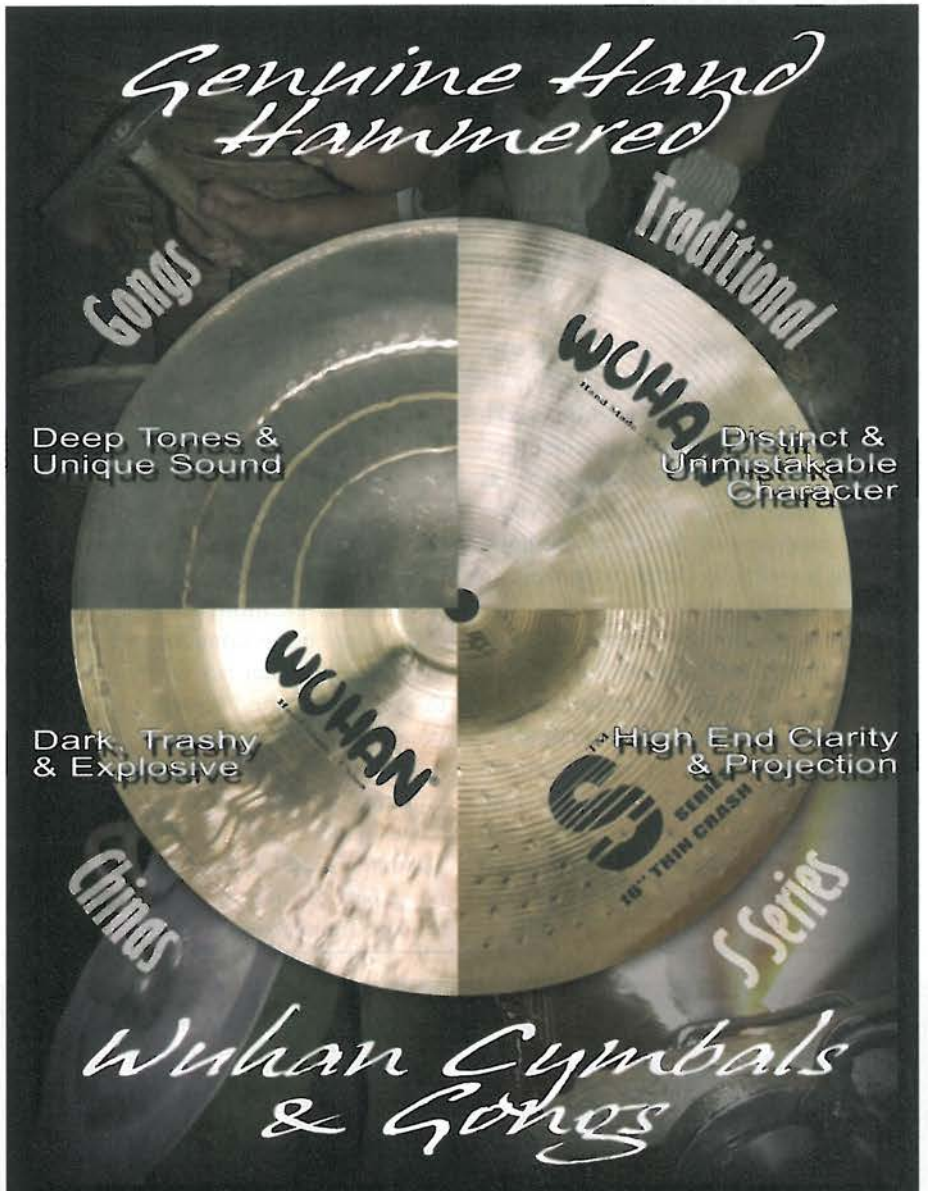
At about 8:00 P.M., the world/fusion group Shakti played an incredible concert. The band consists of bandleader/guitarist John McLaughlin, U. Shrinivas on mandolin, Selvaganesh on kanjira, Shankar Mahadevan on vocals, and Zakir Hussain on tabla.

Selvaganesh's solo near the end of Shakti's set was one of the best drum solos I've ever heard. His instrument, the kanjira, is a small frame drum that looks like a little tambourine with one jingle in it. The drum is played with one hand, and what Selvaganesh can do with it is truly unbelievable.

When playing with Shakti, Zakir Hussain has incorporated a small "drumset" into his setup. He has a small snare drum, a bass drum, and two splash cymbals that he plays with his left hand—all while playing the tabla with his right hand. He sounds like two people playing at the same time.

When Shakti finished their set, the Manipuri Jagoi Marup came back for one piece. Then Zakir told me I was up next! He wanted me to set something up so they could all come out and jam. I couldn't have been more intimidated, but I pushed through my fear, played a short solo, and then set up an up-tempo groove. Zakir joined me first. Then one by one he brought out Ranjit Barot on drumset and then Sivamani on various percussion instruments, and we all jammed and traded licks.

Eventually, John McLaughlin and the other members of Shakti came out, and we all played a Shakti tune together. I didn't know the tune, but I did catch some of



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the korvais (composed unison sections) that they all played, and luckily I knew a few of those. It was quite an invigorating experience.

The concert ended about 10:00 P.M. Afterwards we all went to dinner, where I sat between John McLaughlin and Selvaganesh. I was in Shangri-La talking to two of my biggest influences.

Friday, February 4 started off with breakfast at the hotel with Vikku Vinayakram and John McLaughlin. Vikku was the ghatam player in the original lineup of Shakti. His son Selvaganesh has taken his place in the new lineup. Vikku met the members of Shakti at the hotel and then traveled to Dubai with them to sit in as a special guest.

The rest of the day (fourteen hours actually, from 12:00 noon until 2:00 A.M.) was spent at Ranjit Barot's studio. It was a day of study, teaching, and hanging out. I studied South Indian carnatic rhythms with mridangist Sridar Parthasarthy, who gave me a detailed explanation and demonstration of playing a rhythmic composition at different speeds within the same tempo.

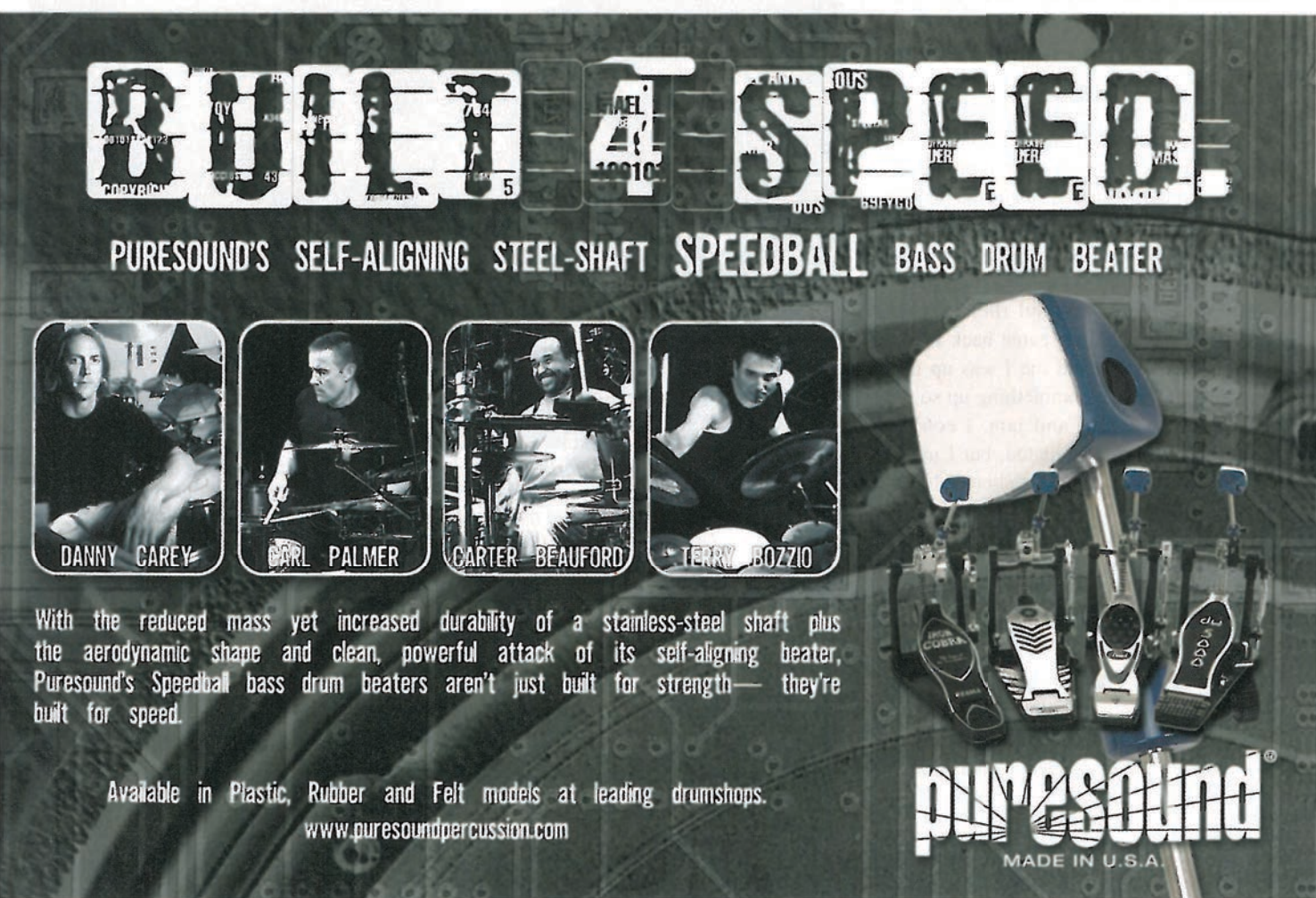
Sridar took a fixed composition—a korvai—and played it in the base tempo, which is subdivided into what we would call quarter notes, 8th notes, and 16th notes. Then he played the entire composition one speed faster using a subdivision of 5s. (That is, five subdivisions per one quarter note.) He rhythmically transposed the entire piece so that it fit within the five-note subdivision, without changing the base pulse. Then he did it in six-, seven-, and eight-beat subdivisions, with the latter being "double-time" as compared to the original way he played the composition.

Then Sridar took it a step further, changing subdivisions as he went, while never losing the beat or changing the composition. Even though he said that his abilities are not uncommon and that most good South Indian percussionists can do this, it was a mind-blowing demonstration.

There were also some young drumset students at the studio. I showed them some of the basics of swing playing. It was interesting for them because swing is not a part of their culture—while to me it's the foundation of drumset playing. They were also interested in how I play Indian rhythms on the drumset, which I was happy to show them.

I noticed that the Indian drumset players use mainly single strokes to play their rhythms. By studying the Western drum rudiments, I've gotten comfortable with "mixed" stickings—combinations of singles and doubles. My approach to playing Indian rhythms on the drumset is new to the Indian drummers because of the way I use rudimental and rudimental-like stickings to approximate the nuances of their rhythms and phrases.

We all were reciting compositions in the South Indian rhythmic language called konakol, which is a favorite thing for Indian drummers to do. Playing konakol rhythms on the drumset has been my passion for the past couple of years. Learning these rhythms is still done in the oral tradition in India. No books or DVDs offer the information, and there's something very cool about that. You have to find a teacher to get the knowledge. And in India, you have to prove that you'll be a good student before the teacher will take you on. It's not just a question of "How much do you charge for lessons?" Many



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times a teacher won't charge any money for the lessons, but will have the student work for him around the home. The main thing is that the teacher knows that his own work will live on in the student. I've always loved studying and learning new ideas about music, and incorporating the influence of Indian rhythms is breathing new life into my playing.

Saturday, February 5 was spent going over my notes from the lessons the day before and practicing in my hotel room. I did a little shopping and met up with Sivamani and his wife in the evening. They had traveled to Bangalore, India to see Sting play a concert that day, so we met for a late supper and had a nice time chatting and eating some great food.

Sunday, February 6 was a relaxing day. I spent the day at the hotel writing emails and practicing. Zakir returned to Mumbai after a gig in Dubai with Shakti, so we met for lunch at my hotel. We had a chance to really talk about the concert on the 3rd, catch up on what we're both doing in our lives, and enjoy some very good food. Also, Zakir instructed me in the fine art of eating with one's fingers, which is the way it's done in India.

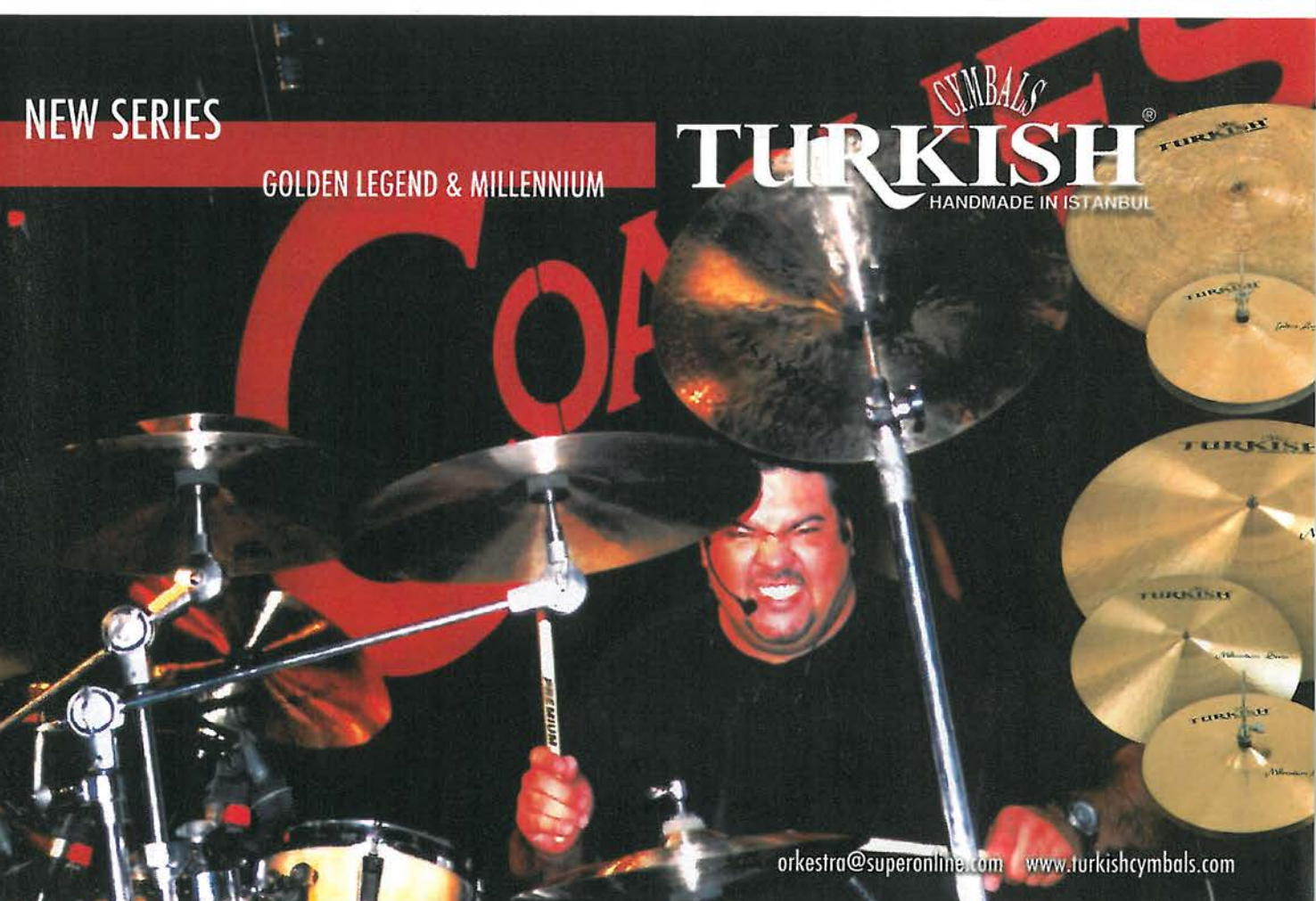
Monday, February 7 was a travel day. My flight left Mumbai at 3:45 A.M., which is a typical time for an international flight to leave India. I had a layover in Frankfurt, Germany and then went on to Moscow, Russia. The weather in Moscow was subfreezing, which was especially shocking after the tropical weather in Mumbai. On the way to the hotel I stopped at the Sonor distributor to pick out drums for the gig that Vital Information was going to be playing at the premier Moscow jazz venue, Le Club. We had played there in 2003, and it was great to be back playing for very appreciative Russian audiences.

Tuesday, February 8 was spent resting, writing, and reflecting on all that had happened in the previous couple of weeks. The rest of the Vital Information bandmembers arrived in Moscow, and for the next four nights—**Wednesday, February 9 through Saturday, February 12**—we'll perform at Le Club. As of this writing we've just finished our first night and we're off to a very good start.

Typically, my schedule is very dense. But it's been a whirlwind couple of weeks, with no end in sight to the travel and gigging. Next up: a weekend in Salt Lake City with Buddy's Buddies, more West Coast touring with Vital Information, an East Coast tour with Buddy's Buddies, a Sonor clinic tour of Asia, a big band tour of New Zealand, and then all summer on the road with a Steps Ahead reunion featuring Michael Brecker, Mike Stern, Mike Mainieri, and Richard Bona.

But the trip to India that I've described here, which was my first, stands alone as one of the most influential and transformative experiences I've ever had. I believe that one of the best ways for Western drumset players to advance their rhythmic abilities in ways that are inherently musical *and* usable is to study the Indian rhythmic systems. For Westerners, they're a largely untapped resource, a highly developed wellspring of rhythmic information and inspiration.

MD Radio **To hear tracks by Steve Smith and Vital Information, tune in to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.**



Jen Lowe
Jason Mraz

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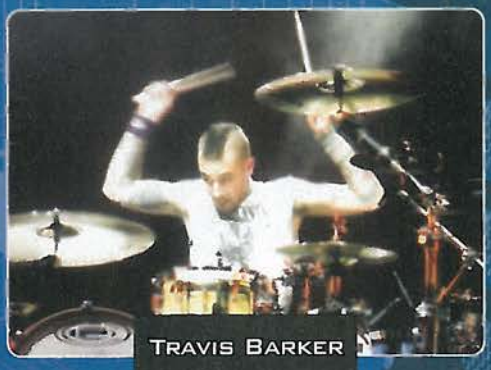

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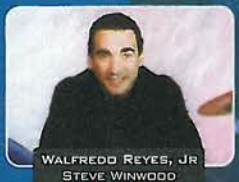
Airto Moreira

Stephen Perkins
Banyan

Rikki Rockett
Poison

Luis Conte

Terrence Higgins
The Dirty Dozen



Walfredo Reyes, Jr
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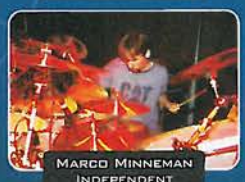

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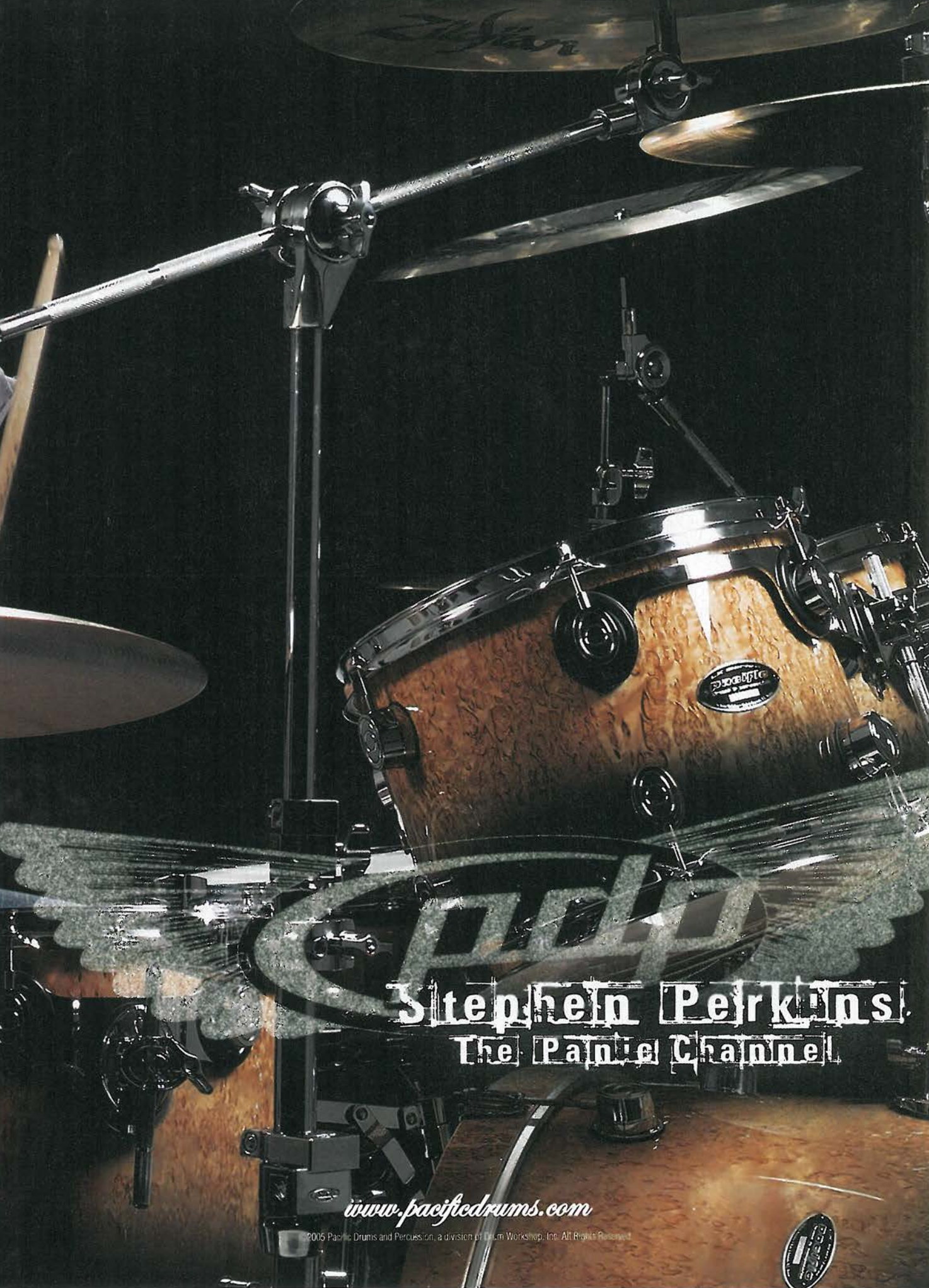

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Billy Hart

Of Unsung Heroes And Jazz Giants

Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Paul La Raia

Billy Hart is one of the unsung giants of jazz. He's recorded over *six hundred* albums, including seminal dates with Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, Stan Getz, Joe Zawinul, Sam Rivers, Pharoah Sanders, John Scofield, Lee Konitz, Hank Jones, Pat Martino, Charles Lloyd, Dave Liebman, and most recently, heavy hitters like Michael Brecker, Joe Lovano, and Dave Douglas. Obviously, Hart is doing something that jazz musicians across wide stylistic divides find irresistible.

Hart has been a member of groups led by Wes Montgomery and McCoy Tyner, and while with Miles and Herbie, contributed to such landmark recordings as *On The Corner* and *Sextant*. He's also led and recorded a number of distinctive bands, including his current lineup, which consists of pianist Ethan Iverson, tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, and bassist Ben Street, a group of which the *New York Times* said, "Some jazz bands operate under a kind of aesthetic mandate, imposed by a bandleader in search of a sound. Many are much looser, allowing for whatever happens in the combination of certain ingredients. Billy Hart, who has had a busy career in New York since the late 1960s, allows for happy accidents." Hart's "happy accidents" approach is chronicled on his latest release, *Oceans Of Time*.

The sixty-three-year-old Hart is a true chameleon, able to adapt to any situation quickly and fluently, approaching every gig with acute musicality, interpretive intelligence, and the kind of split-second decision-making skills that mark only the best studio musicians. He can blend into the background in a supportive role, but is at his best when his wonderfully textural drumming spirit is allowed to roam.

With Hancock and Miles, Hart played slapping backbeats and exotic fills. With Jimmy Smith, he was a soulful swinger with serious stick definition. Charles Lloyd brought out Hart's delicate cymbal flourishes and increasingly sophisticated thinking. Playing with Chris Potter, Ethan Iverson, and Tim Armacost, Hart is all these things and more, his drumming following an equally abstract and adventurous swing conception that pushes the younger musicians down paths they didn't even know existed.

Calling Montclair, New Jersey home, Hart leads an incredibly busy existence as both performer and teacher. When not gigging literally around the globe, he teaches at three prominent music schools: Oberlin, Western Michigan University, and New England Conservatory. Hart has one of the most comprehensive grasps on drums and drumming history around.

At the core of all this is Hart's true love of the instrument. The drummer can talk for hours about the connections between Nasheet Waits and Rashied Ali, how Los Van Van's Changuito forever changed drumming, and why Mark Mondesir may be the drummer of the future. But clearly, William W. "Jabali" Hart is one of the greatest jazz drummers today, in the here and now.

MD: You've been very busy on the jazz scene for almost forty years. You've recorded with young guys, old guys, famous and unknown, hard bop and experimental. What's the key to staying in demand?

Billy: I feel a logical connection between what would be considered the older styles and the newer styles. I've been around long enough to actually see the evolution. So when I hear a new guy playing I don't think, "Wow, where did that come from?" I *know* where it came from. I can relate it to everything else I've heard.

One time I saw a saxophone player in Sweden who really reminded me of Coltrane. I'm no dupe. I know what Coltrane sounds like. I thought this guy sounded just like him, but he said, "Col-who?" He knew Michael Brecker. That's what happens with a lot of cats. When I heard Nasheet Waits play, I thought he sounded a lot like me when he plays free, but he also sounds like Jon Christensen. I think he sounds like both of us. Now, Nasheet had never heard

Christensen. But I have.

MD: So that means when you're on a gig you know automatically what fits the music?

Billy: I'm not Merlin, but I have something that I can present that I think may work, and a lot of times it does.

MD: You also don't play one style. You're not a hard bop drummer per se, nor are you totally free. You seem to be very flexible.

Billy: Flexible is the word. That said, I still believe that true contemporary drumming is what Sonny Murray, Rashied Ali, and Milford Graves did, and what the younger drummers are doing now is beginning to rationalize what they did academically. I'm talking about players like Nasheet, Jim Black, Susie Ibarra, Smitty Smith, Jeff Watts.... Rashied says Coltrane called it "multi-directional." When they were playing multi-directionally, they didn't take the time to figure out academically what it was. Now, forty years later with four different generations analyzing that music, whether it's conscious or subconscious, they're able

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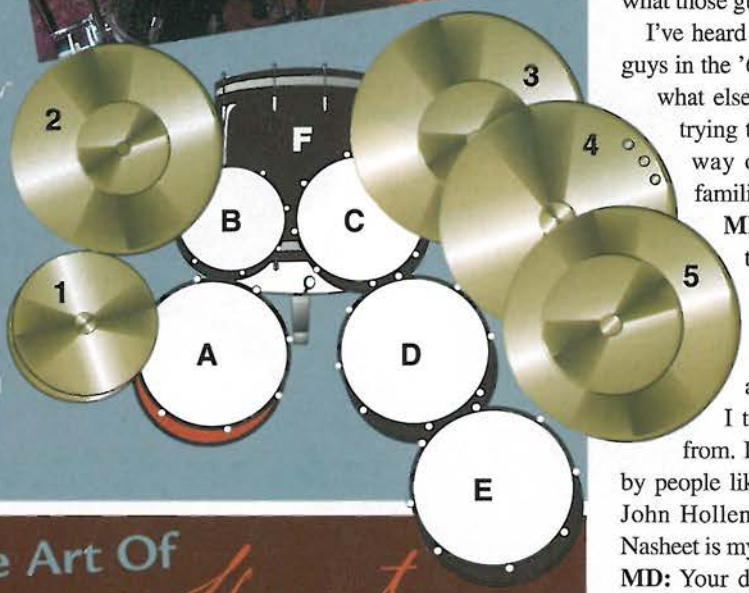
Sticks: Zildjian Billy Hart signature 7A (natural finish)



The Art Of Hart

Recordings

Artist	Album
Billy Hart	Oceans Of Time
Billy Hart	Amethyst
Billy Hart	Rah
Billy Hart	Oshumare
Billy Hart	Enchance
Michael Brecker, Joe Lovano, Dave Liebman	Gathering Of Spirits
Herbie Hancock	Sextant
Herbie Hancock	Mwandishi
Herbie Hancock	Crossings
Miles Davis	On The Corner
Miles Davis	Big Fun
Charles Lloyd	The Call
Charles Lloyd	All My Relations
Charles Lloyd	Canto
Pat Martino	Live At Yoshi's
Ethan Iverson	Minor Passions
Frank Morgan	City Nights: Live At The Jazz Standard
Sonny Fortune	Four In One
David Fiuczynski	Jazzpunk
Chris Potter	Moving In

Favorites

Artist	Album	Drummer
Brice Wassy	N'Ga Funk	Brice Wassy
John Coltrane	A Love Supreme	Elvin Jones
Elvin Jones	Live In Europe	Elvin Jones
Ahmad Jamal	But Not For Me, Live At The Pershing	Vernell Fournier
Miles Davis	Seven Steps To Heaven	Tony Williams
Miles Davis	Milestones	Philly Joe Jones
Max Roach	Jazz In 3/4 Time	Max Roach
Max Roach	Clifford Brown/Max Roach Quintet	Max Roach
Miles Davis	Friday Night At The Blackhawk	Jimmy Cobb
Albert Ayler	Prophecy	Sunny Murray
Cecil Taylor	Unit Structures	Andrew Cyrille
Eddie Harris	Freedom Jazz Dance	Billy Higgins
Ed Blackwell Trio	Walls-Bridges	Ed Blackwell

to imitate it in a consistent way that makes it academically rational.

A concept that everyone talks about now but that no one ever discussed before is metric modulation. Before, the closest they got to it was Elvin playing polyrhythmically. But he never discussed the fact that it was odd phrasing, a phrase of five or seven. But that's what those guys were doing back then.

I've heard people say that the avant-garde guys in the '60s weren't trying to swing. But what else could they possibly have been trying to do? They just found a unique way of swinging that you weren't familiar with.

MD: Can you play multi-directionally when need be?

Billy: When I need to, I can. And when I hear the latest flavor of the month, I'll be excited about it. Then, after I analyze it, I trace it back to where it came from. In the final analysis, I'm excited by people like Jim Black, Tom Rainey, and John Hollenbeck. And of anybody today, Nasheet is my favorite.

MD: Your drumming can also sound very atmospheric. Does that come out of your love of free players?

Billy: Yeah, I love it all. It's funny that the tradition of African and Indian drumming is centuries old, and that people danced to some very adventurous stuff because they were familiar with it. But instead of our taking it forward, advancing that euphoria of rhythmic significance, today music is headed the other way. Rhythmically, things are getting simpler and simpler. How much farther down can you go?

For me, the purpose of music is to give people optimism and to be uplifting. Art is a mirror of the community. Someone has to take responsibility for uplifting the people. I feel that if people understood more about someone like Rashied Ali, they'd enjoy his drumming as much as any pop or commercial music.

MD: A lot of so-called commercial music can be a bit dumbed down.

Billy: I do believe that certain drummers who play free or atmospheric music are the *real* contemporary drummers. Yes, I've seen certain drummers who use the pop vocabulary advance it, great players like Dennis Chambers. Somewhere between Zigaboo Modeliste and Terreon Gully I've seen the music grow, though the rate is slow.

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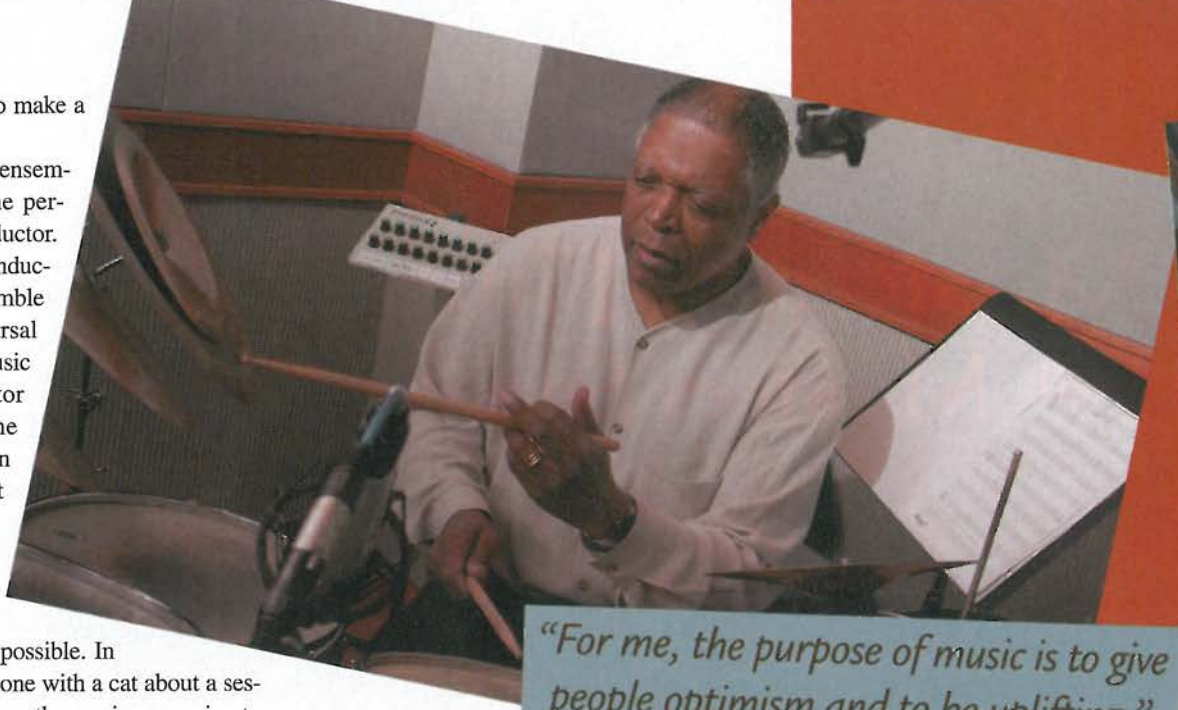
Billy Hart



MD: What do you do to make a session successful?

Billy: In an American ensemble, the drummer is the percussionist and the conductor. It's unheard of for a conductor in a European ensemble to go to the first rehearsal without knowing the music in advance. A conductor knows the music so the rest of the ensemble can depend on him. So what I do is, as soon as I negotiate the money for a session, I want the music sent to me as far ahead of time as possible. In fact, I just got off the phone with a cat about a session, and I asked him when the music was going to be here.

MD: Is that unusual?

Billy: It's unusual for people who don't make a lot of records. But that's how I do it. Some leaders will go out of their way to *not* give me the music up front. They say they don't want a preconceived thing, but *they* preconceived it when they composed it. They'll say, "Oh, you'll hear it" or "I didn't get around to writing a part for you." Just give me the music.

MD: Are there things you do to make a session go smoothly?

Billy: Sure. Just play the music correctly and accurately the first time. Then, if we have to do some extra takes, I'll feel free to take some liberties because my part was done right the first time.

MD: Are you ever on a session where someone is not up to the level of the gig?

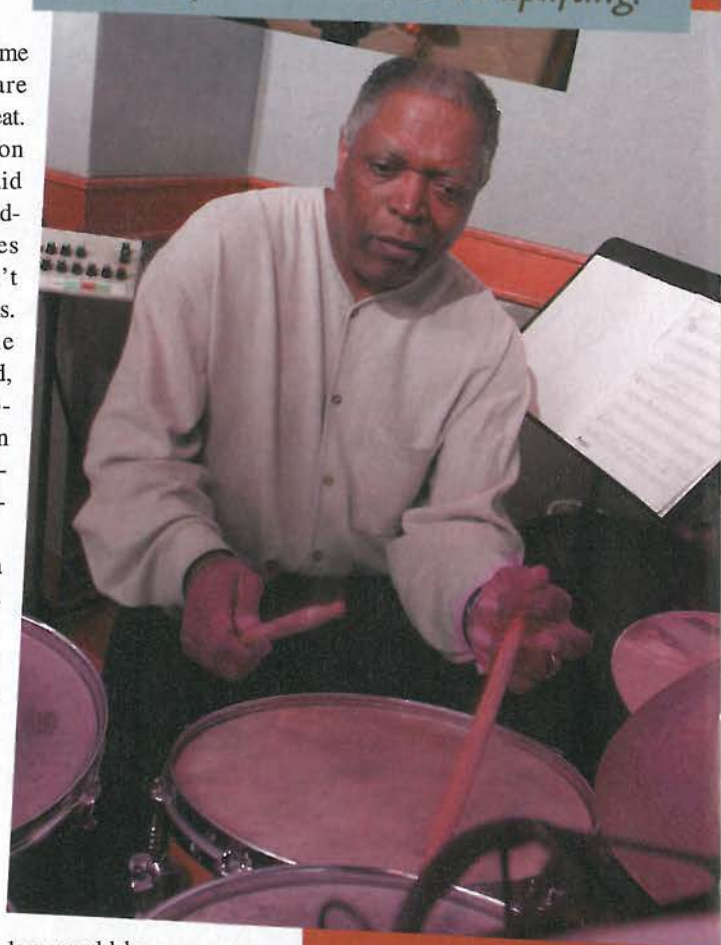
Billy: That's not my problem.

MD: You don't have to compensate for their weakness?

Billy: Professionalism is professionalism. You've got a job to do and the only hindrance is when they compromise your situation or bring your thing down. A professional knows to correct that problem.

The first time I had any kind of conversation with Miles Davis, he complimented my playing. This was when I was playing with Herbie Hancock. Immediately, the next thing he said before he hired me for *On The Corner* was, "There are three areas of the beat: you can play behind the beat, you can play on top of the beat, and you can play right on the beat." I think what he meant was, if the beat falls right in the pocket, that can happen in any area of the beat. That's when everybody feels it and you don't have to change anything, it just feels good.

"For me, the purpose of music is to give people optimism and to be uplifting."

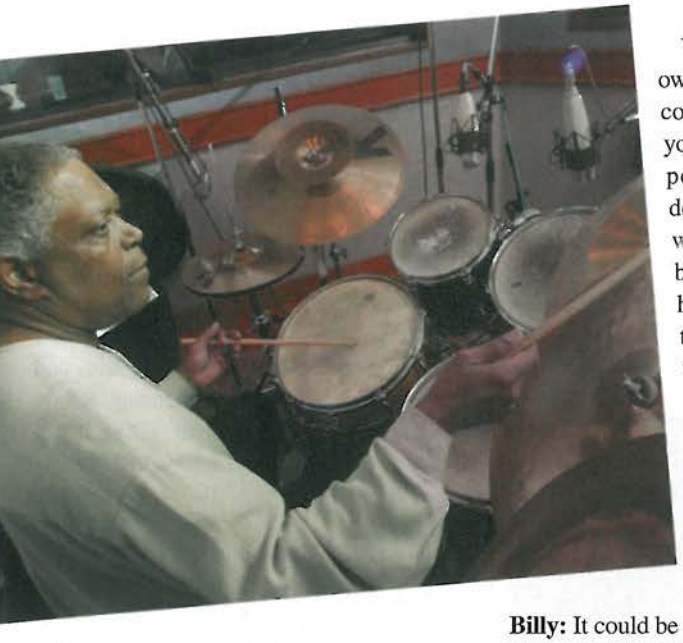


That's the first time I realized there are three areas of the beat. At that first session with Miles, he said some people shouldn't play the blues because they don't know what it means. And that was the first time I realized, "Oh, is this supposed to mean something?" I started looking at it differently.

When I go into a session today, I like to have some general idea as to what's going to happen so I can understand what the composer is trying to say and what the music means. It could have a blues inflection, or three bars could be funky that someone else might miss if they're just reading the music. It might have more of a Bobby Blue Bland feeling or more of a Messien vibe.

MD: How do you key into what the leader wants?

Billy: It depends if the leader is the composer.



With one guy, when I asked to see the music, he said, "Man, in my band you don't need any music. Just keep the 'dance' in the music." I thought of Jack DeJohnette automatically. The first time I played with Sam Rivers, I asked him how he made music that was so open and with no chords. He said, "Man, we're just playing. You know it ain't that hard to do."

You have to count on your own life experience and have confidence. That will allow you to face any situation in a positive way. That confidence is what most leaders want. In fact, they'll fire the best cat if he's tentative. I've hired cats that you might think were tasteless, but they played with so much confidence that it gave everyone else something to lean on.

MD: Are you generally contacted by the artist, the label, or the producer for a session?

Billy: It could be any of them.

MD: How do you negotiate your fee?

Billy: I just ask for as much as I can get. [laughs] The guy will ask, "How much will you do it for?" How much will I do it for? I'm an American. How much would George Bush do it for? Man, will you please give me as much as you can? I'm not asking for points [a percentage of album sales], which I should be asking for. Suppose the drummer on that first Norah Jones record had gotten points? He could retire now.

MD: Let's switch gears and get into your cymbal sound. You've always had a wonderful sound and touch. On your solo in "Triangle," from the recent Saxophone Summit album featuring Michael Brecker, Joe Lovano, and Dave Liebman [titled *Gathering Of Spirits*], you begin by rolling on the cymbals. It sets up that whole textural style. Did you work on your cymbal sound over and above your drum sound?

Billy: There's an impression of a certain cymbal sound that everyone says they love. I don't go for that. I go for the sound that *I* love.

Everyone says they want the old K sound. Usually, when you have a cymbal that dark, it has too much spread. It's dark, but it doesn't have any ping. Well, I like a clear stick sound on a cymbal. I like a little bit of spread, like a cymbal that has rivets, but I don't want it to wash out everything else. I want to be able to hear the music.

Zildjian has been sending me recent models of their K Constantinoples to see if I think they're getting closer to the mythical K Zildjian sound. And they have! But I

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think they've actually *improved* on the sound. A lot of people want what they *think* was that old K sound, but that was back when musicians used all acoustic instruments and reproduction. These new cymbals have the old presence but with a bit more clarity, which I think sounds great.

I think of my drums the same way. I try to get every drum I play to have "my" sound. I have a system for tuning. [He sings the intervals, and sitting at his kit, strikes the toms.] Those are specific notes, but not in a particular key. They're tuned to intervals that I like. And that goes for the snare and bass drum as well. All of my drums have that same tuning. Lewis Nash uses the same intervals, although his overall tuning is a bit lower. I'm more Max Roached out—I like my drums tuned much higher overall.

MD: Every great drummer has their own sense of tuning.

Billy: Oh, yeah. You can't play it if you don't hear it. I had a cymbal stolen in Holland once and I had to borrow another drummer's cymbals. The cymbals were so against what was in my mind that I almost got physically ill.

MD: And I understand that your Zildjian signature stick comes in two different weights?

Billy: Yes. They're the same size, but the black model is lighter than the white one. I use the lighter one for playing with trios and on softer gigs, like Toots Thielemans, Kenny Werner, and Mark Copeland. I like using smaller sticks because I like hitting the drums hard. Elvin was like that. He used lighter sticks.

I played four years with Stan Getz, where we played with Joao Gilberto. Sometimes Joao sang so softly that I would use a stick about the size of a chopstick. I would play on the rim of the drum and play a brush on my leg. I got used to compensating.

MD: You have students everywhere, from New York to Michigan to New England. What's your basic approach to teaching the ride cymbal beat?

Billy: There was no ride cymbal at first, just the snare, bass drum, and a sort of splash cymbal. And people danced themselves into a coma with just that. Today, if a kid just plays the cymbal and doesn't realize the function of the bass drum, then it's like driving a car that's out of alignment. He won't have any control.

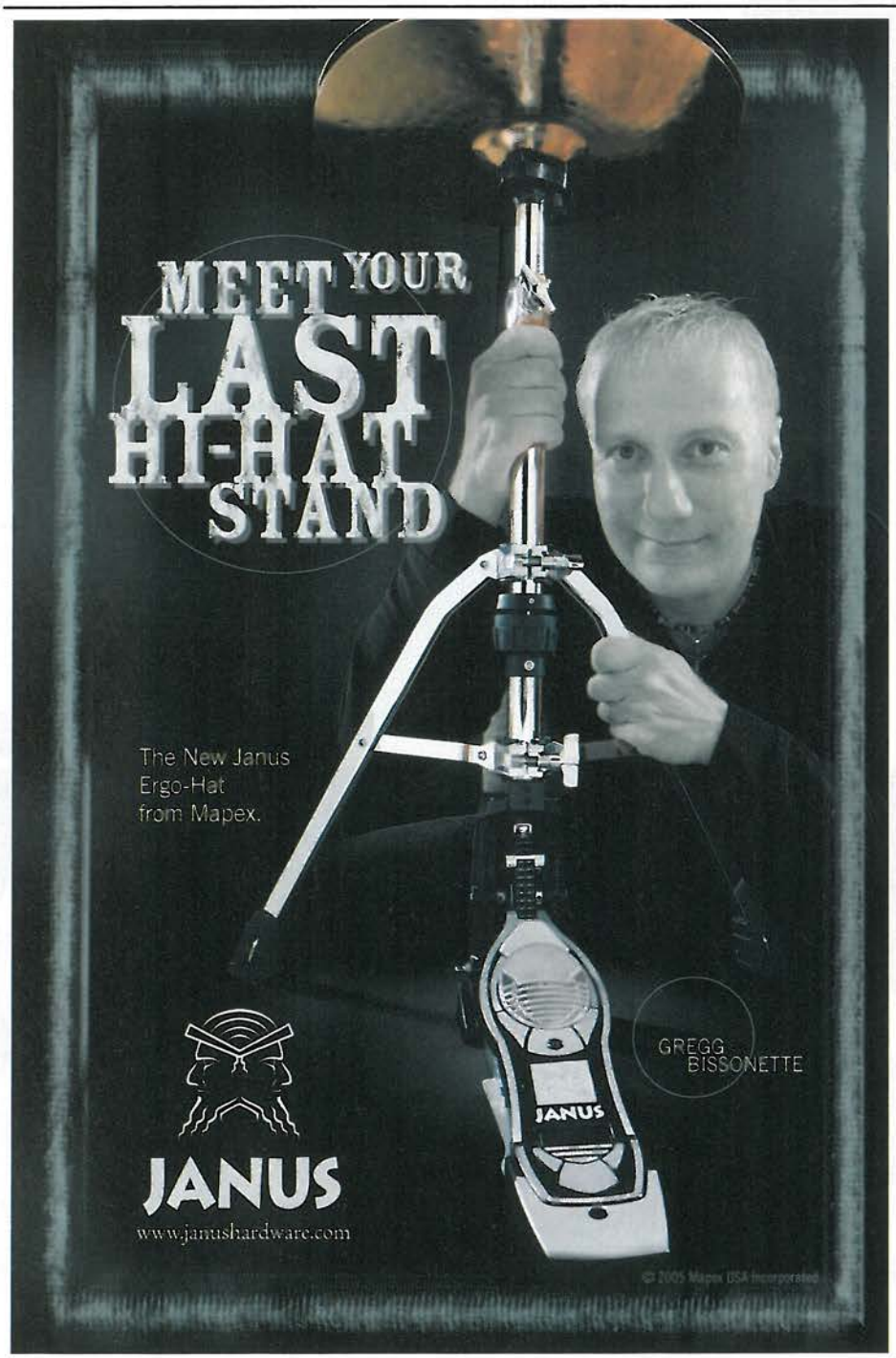
MD: You're teaching at Oberlin, New England, and Western Michigan. Do you teach the same thing at all three schools?

Billy: Yes. I have a method I use, unless the student is articulate enough to ask about specific things. Of course, every student has things they want to work on.

One thing I've been using lately with my students are the old radio interviews I have of Mel Lewis from WKCR. I also have CDs of Baby Dodds and Papa Jo Jones talking about the drums. When you start telling drummers about the bass drum and the ride cymbal being traditionally connected, some of them don't want to believe there is a connection between today's drummers and Baby Dodds, Zutty Singleton, Paul Barbarin, and Chick Webb. They only want to know about drummers playing today, people who they're familiar with.

MD: Do you teach out of your book, *Jazz Drumming* [published by Advance Music]?

Billy: I've expanded on the book. I'm actual-



ly working on a second book. I also teach from my version of the "drum tree," a fifteen-page vocabulary of various drum influences, including Sid Catlett, Max Roach, Earl Palmer, and many others.

If a student is really smart, I can give them stuff that they can't get anywhere else, like a Dafnis Prieto lesson that he wrote out for me. He donated it to my class. I also have one from William Kennedy.

MD: Do you work the teaching around your gigs, or the gigs around the teaching?

Billy: The gigs take preeminence. If I didn't have the gigs, my teaching wouldn't be relevant.

MD: When do you practice? Do you have time?

Billy: As far as I am concerned, I haven't really practiced in twenty years. What I do now, whenever I get the chance, is play whatever excites me at the moment. But these are things that I would do as more of a warm-up than a practice routine. It might be something I heard a young drummer play, or it might be something from an older drummer.

You know that the songo is an Afro-Cuban rhythm supposedly innovated by Jose Luis Quintana, also known as Changuito. I think it's the most popular rhythm played on the drumset today. The first time I really noticed it was when Alex Acuña and Omar Hakim played it, and, of course, Dave Weckl when he was with Michel Camilo. Then I heard Marvin "Smitty" Smith play it, as well as Jeff "Tain" Watts on his first album. He was doing it in seven. But that's one thing that I'll play as a warm-up exercise.

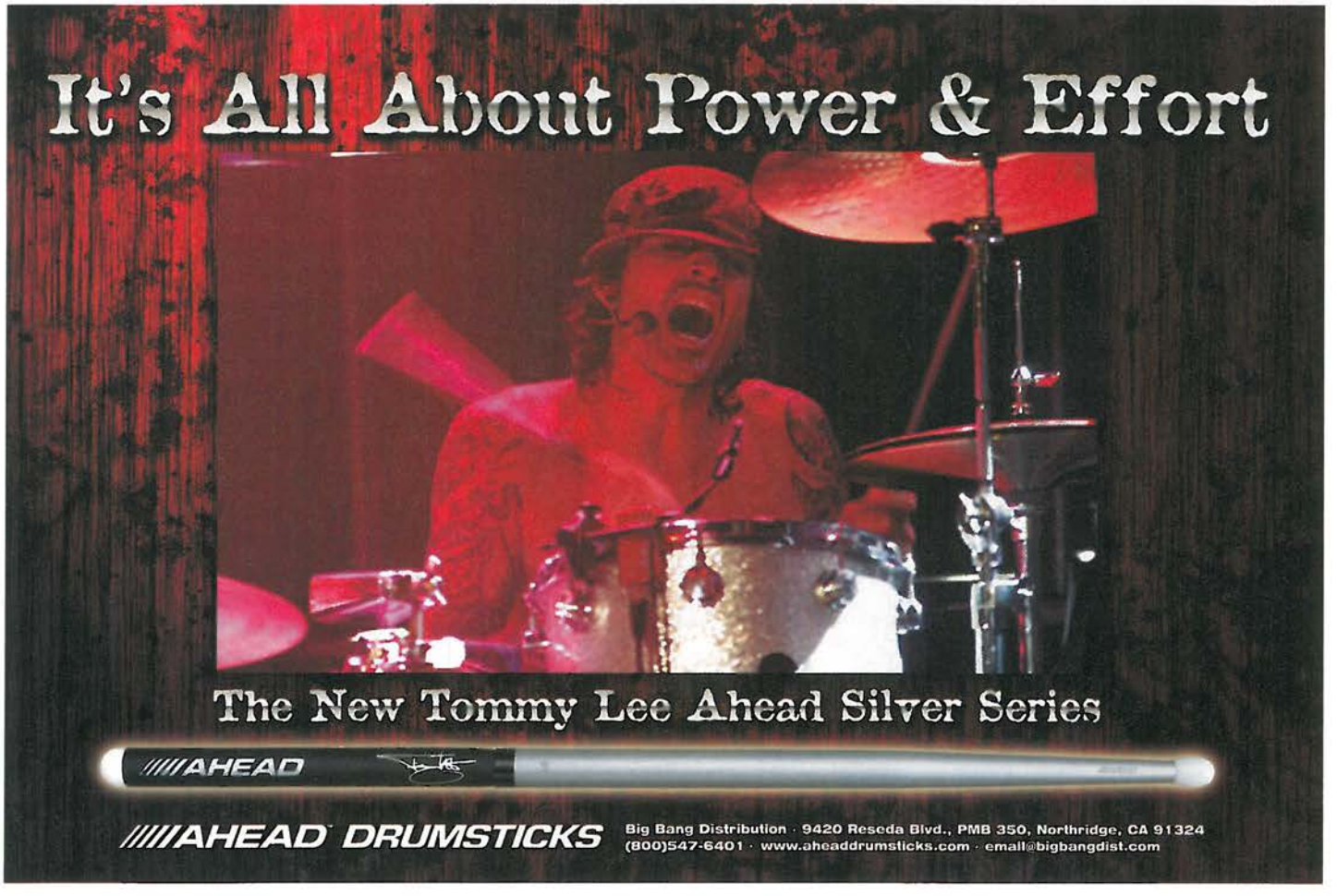
When I played with Stan Getz, Buddy Rich used to come by and sit right in front of the drums and watch me play. One time, Buddy's manager told me that Buddy's favorite drum break was on a record that Shadow Wilson had recorded with Count Basie, on the tune "Queer Street." I felt like I'd been turned on to some ancient gift, like Indiana Jones. I researched that break, learned how to play it, and now it's a part of my vocabulary. That would be another warm-up. I'll also work on a Tony Williams double stop kind of thing—it could be a bunch of different things. And occasionally I'll hear something of my own too. [laughs]

MD: You often set up musical motifs when you solo, as on "Tricycle" from the Saxophone Summit album, and "Black Sand Beach," from saxophonist Tim Armacost's album *The Wishing Well*. That's an exceptional solo. What's your basic soloing concept?

Billy: Of course, I've heard Tony and Elvin use motifs for soloing, but where I got the general concept from was by listening to Miles' *Sketches Of Spain*. There's a track on there that has a trumpet fanfare and a march; you can almost see it. [He sings the melody.] There is a drum cadence that's supposed to be more than one drummer, and then all of it stops and it sounds like Miles is on a balcony addressing a crowd of people. It sounds like it could have happened in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries in Spain. But that's where I got the concept. I'll play some kind of opening prelude to a story, then I'll play the story, then I'll improvise on the story, and then I'll try to play the prelude again as a finale. I thought I did that pretty well on Herbie's *Crossings* album.

MD: Do you always play the melody, or is it sometimes more abstract than that?

Billy: The improvisation is the abstraction. You mean do I always play the same



melody? No, I don't, but I do have at least three melodies I gravitate towards. If you check out some of the six hundred records I've made, I must have repeated those melodies many times.

You ask about drummers who play melodies when they solo and who play on the form of the piece. Of course I do. But there are many drummers who don't. More don't than do. But my favorite drummer who *does* is Jimmy Cobb. Check out what he plays on Miles' *Live At The Blackhawk*.

I was in a coffee shop in Japan a while ago and heard "This I Dig Of You," off of Hank Mobley's *Soul Station* record. The tune has Art Blakey on drums. His solo on that tune is so perfect in terms of playing the form. I ended up playing that song over and over again. People in the coffee shop were saying, "Can you please stop playing that song?" That solo is perfect.

MD: What's the future of your band with Iverson, Turner, and Street?

Billy: Ethan and Mark had been talking about wanting to play with me at least six years ago. They asked if they formulated a plan to get gigs, would I do it, and I said yes. So for the first time, this is a band that was put together from the enthusiasm of the other musicians for *me*.

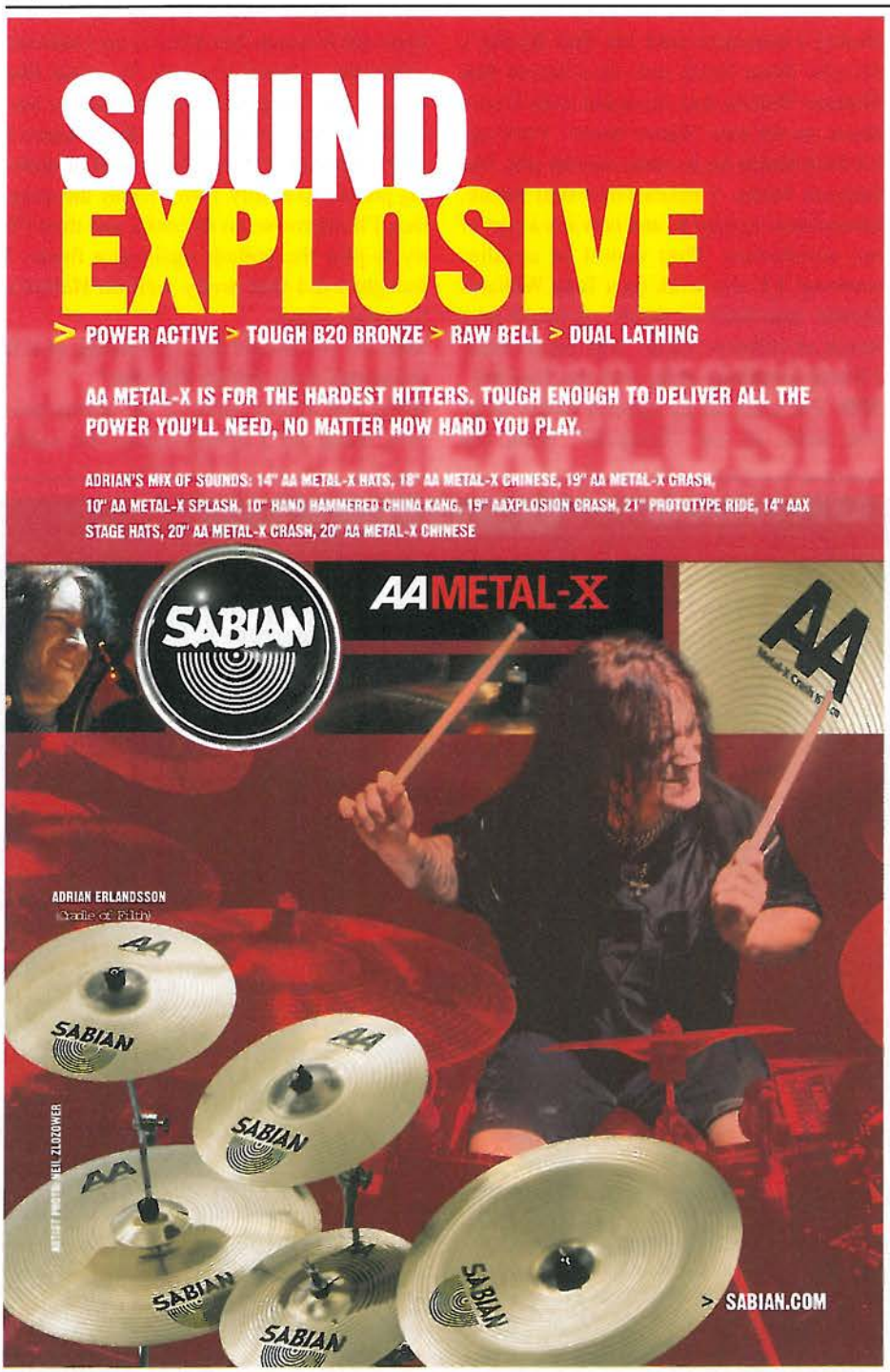
MD: You've been in the music business for almost fifty years. Are you still excited about every gig?

Billy: [He lets out a long, hearty belly laugh.] I know you hate all these long stories, but I was once at a Richard Davis record date at Hank Jones' house. Richard Davis is one of the great bassists, but he had hired another guy, Bill Lee [father of director Spike Lee], who is also a great bassist. Anyway, Bill Lee and I are there with Hank Jones and Richard Davis, two of the most phenomenal professional studio musicians in the world. We were rehearsing this tune, and as we began to relate to this piece of music and whatever difficulty it might hold, Bill Lee stops the rehearsal and says, "Remember, gentlemen: Enjoy the music." He was making the point that the success of a piece of music is in your enjoyment of it, in a professional way, of course.

Part of being a professional is to enjoy the music. Sure, sometimes you have to do a gig and you're tired or you had an argument with your wife or your car broke down. But in theory, you're supposed to enjoy every gig you do.

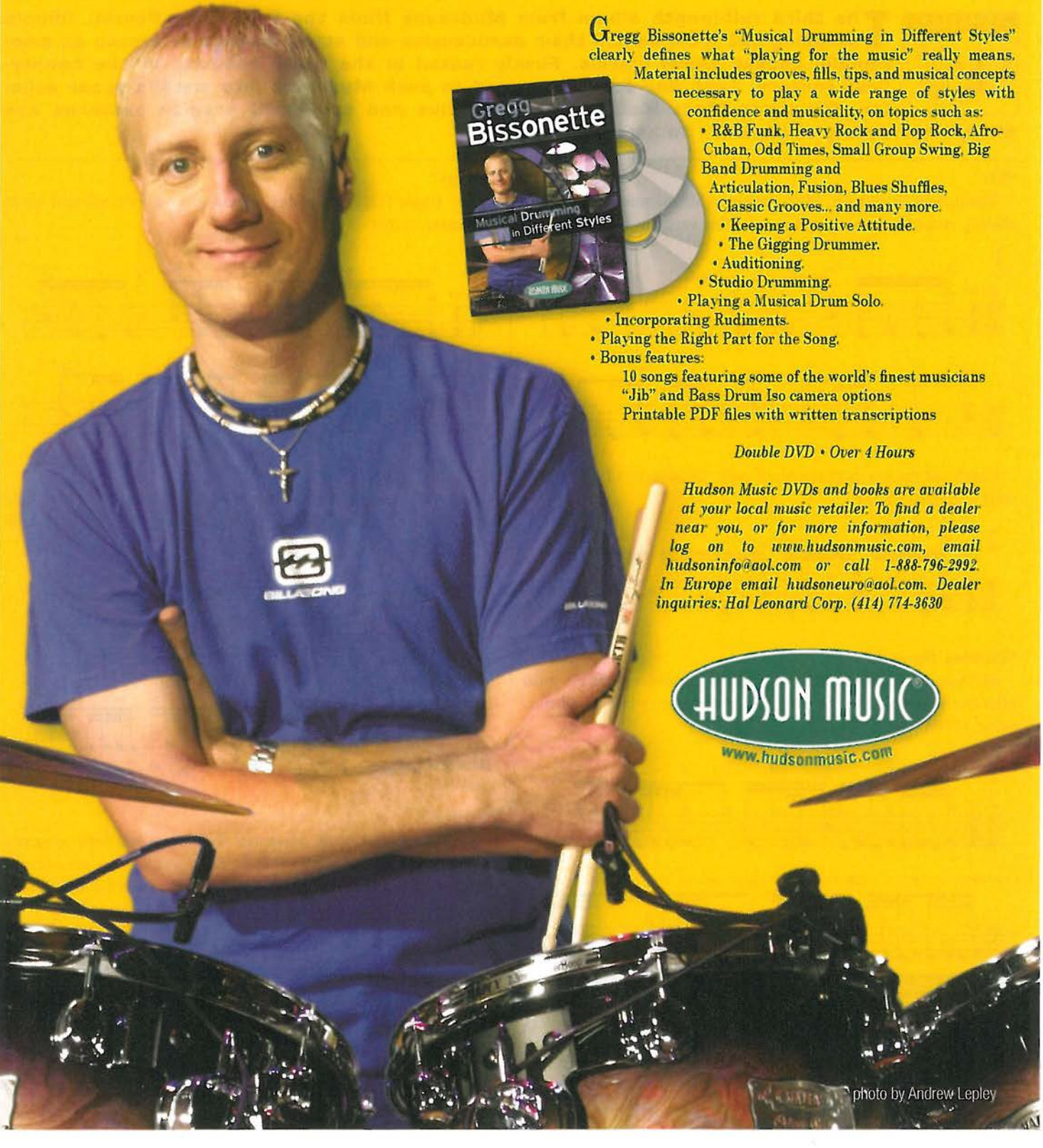
MD: You know so much about the history of the drumset. But can you look forward and describe the drummer of the future?

Billy: Well, I think the drummer of the future will be totally ambidextrous for musical reasons. Drummers like Antonio Sanchez, Dafnis Prieto, and Steve Berrios are so advanced that they're not necessarily playing with Latin bands anymore, exclusively. Because of Horacio Hernandez and Antonio Sanchez, you now have the left foot clave pedal, in addition to the hi-hat and double pedals. That's four pedals total. And if you talk to Dennis Chambers, what makes him different is he's coming from the left side. He had to play left-hand percussion in P-Funk at the same time he was playing drumset. He's ambidextrous, as are Kenwood Dennard and Mark Mondesir. So yeah, the drummer of the future will be totally ambidextrous. But for me [he laughs], I leave that alone.



GREGG BISSONETTE

MUSICAL DRUMMING IN DIFFERENT STYLES



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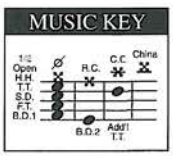
Mudvayne's
Matt McDonough
Lost And Found

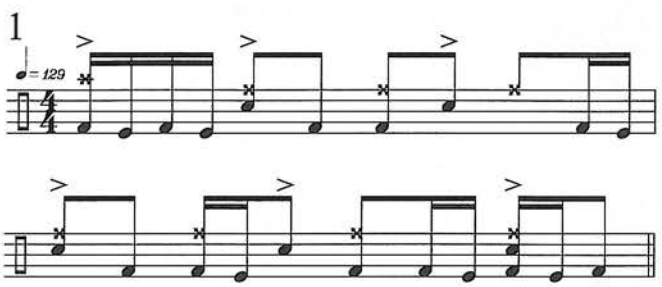
by Ed Breckenfeld



The third full-length album from Mudvayne finds the boys from Peoria, Illinois stepping out from behind their pseudonyms and stage makeup to create an emotionally honest metal classic. Firmly rooted in the harsh realities of the twenty-first century, *Lost And Found* is poised to push Mudvayne into metal's upper echelon. Drummer Matt McDonough's creative and surgically precise patterns are always interesting to explore. So here we go....

"FD"

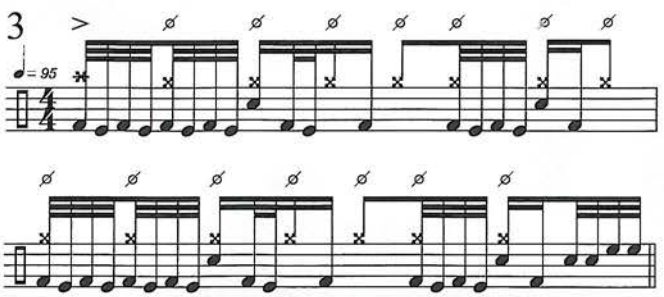
Throughout the album, Matt constructs disorienting grooves by shifting around his snare patterns, as in this verse beat. (0:30)



Check out the eye-popping bit of pure speed in this fill from the song's re-intro. (1:58)

"Pushing Through"

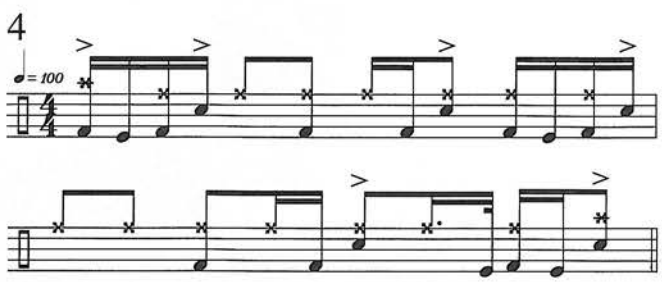
McDonough's double kick work is, of course, one of his most effective weapons. Here he uses it to pump energy into a half-time verse. (1:08)



To hear these tracks from Matt McDonough and Mudvayne, tune in to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com

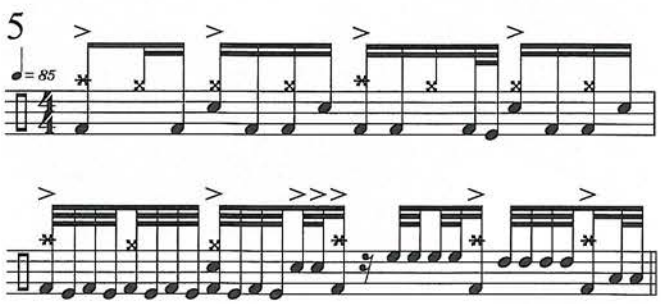
"Happy"

This single features another unique groove with unusual snare placement. (1:16)



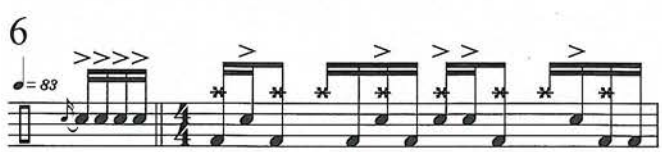
"Rain, Sun, Gone"

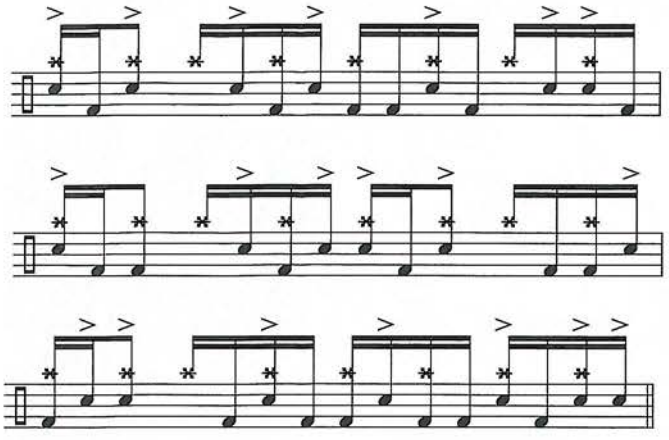
Here's Matt using double bass to shove an already intense beat into overdrive. His end fill effectively answers the 32nd-note kick pattern. (3:28)



"Choices"

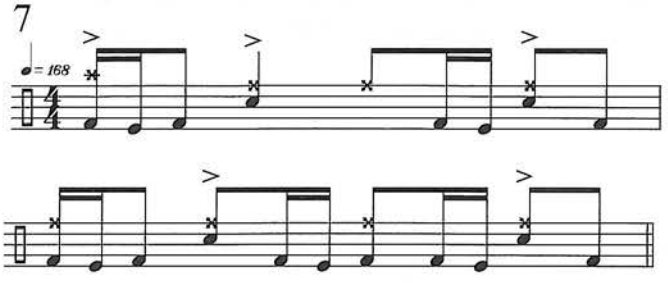
Look at the kick/snare movement in this brilliant little sequence from the climax of this eight-minute opus. The *absence* of McDonough's usual double bass barrage helps keep the attention on the song's important lyrical message. (6:08)





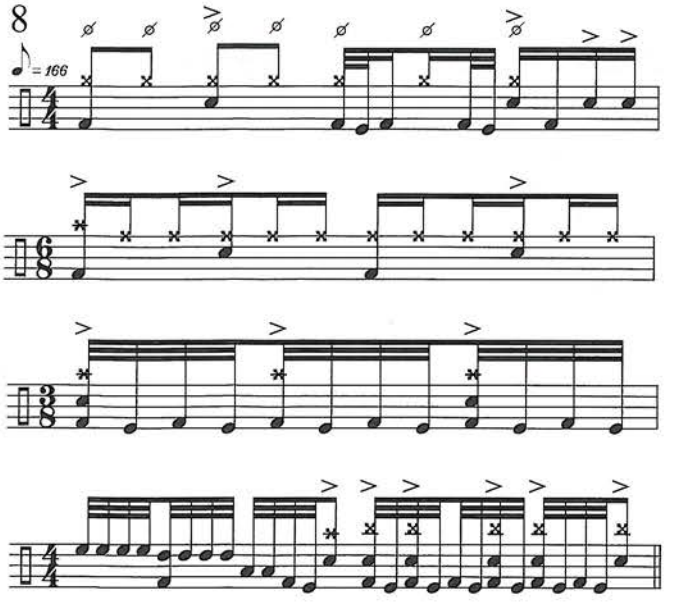
"Just"

The verse of this track contains some great examples of syncopated double kick work in a fast song. (0:23)



"Pulling The String"

Mudvayne flexes their math-rock muscle in this tune. Notice how Matt gives each section of this compound time signature sequence it's own identity by moving from hi-hat to ride cymbal, crash, and finally China cymbal. (0:06)



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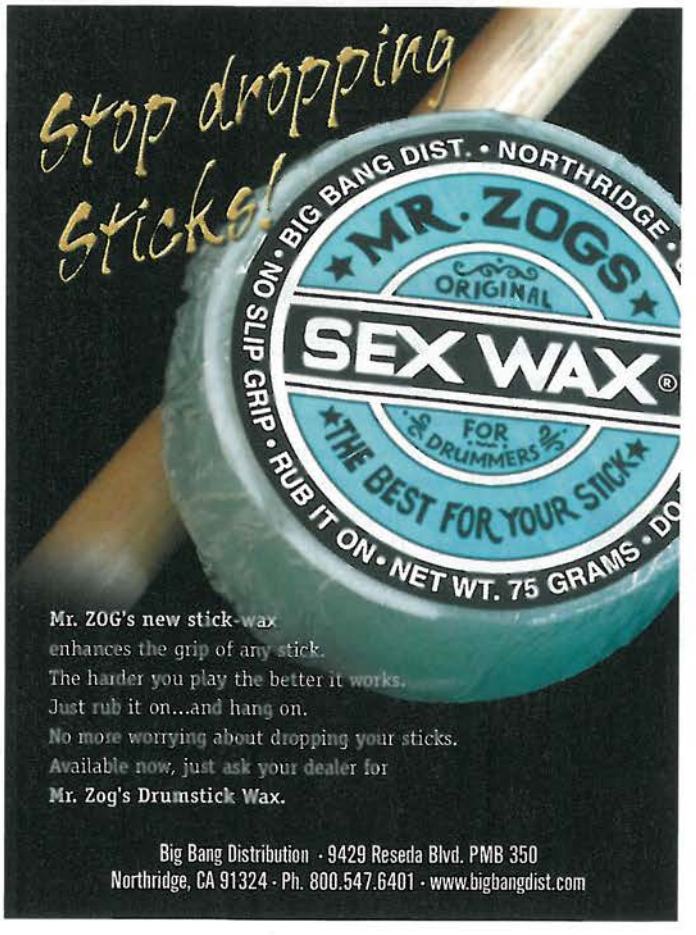
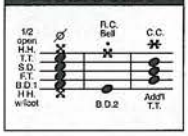


Dream Theater's Mike Portnoy Style & Analysis

by Chris DeChiara

MUSIC KEY



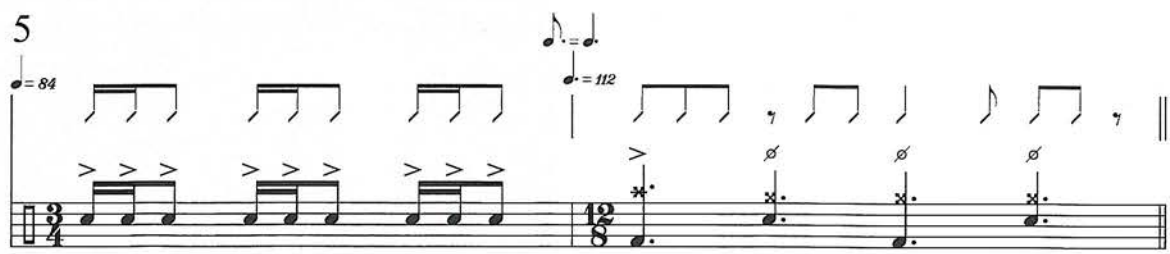
Mike Portnoy is well established as one of today's top rock drummers. In this article, we're going to take a look at some of the aspects of Mike's drumming that have helped shape his impressive career.

One of Mike's favorite "tricks" involves different combinations of beats on the snare drum and toms, followed by two strokes with the feet. Here are three basic examples.

Once you're comfortable with each pattern, try combining them together and orchestrate them around the toms. There are endless variations. Here's an example from the classic track "Pull Me Under" off of the disc *Images & Words*. (6:32)

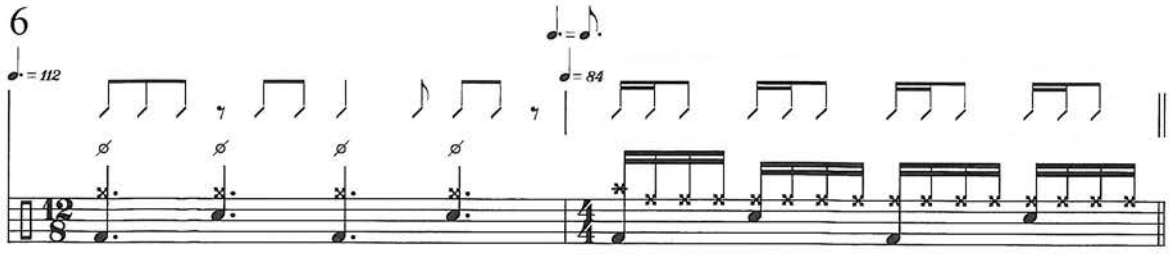
Now let's take a look at how Mike's drumming relates to Dream Theater's music. Mike and guitarist John Petrucci write most of the band's material together, and their collaboration has led to some magnificent arrangements. One technique they often use is called metric modulation. Metric modulation is a device that uses subdivisions of the original pulse to shift to a faster or slower tempo, depending on how the subdivisions are grouped. For the following examples, the guitar rhythm is notated above the staff to illustrate the modulation.

In the track "The Mirror" from the album *Awake*, the 16th notes in the guitar part are turned into 8th-note triplets when the drums enter. As a result, the dotted 8th note in the original tempo becomes the dotted quarter note after the modulation. (0:05)



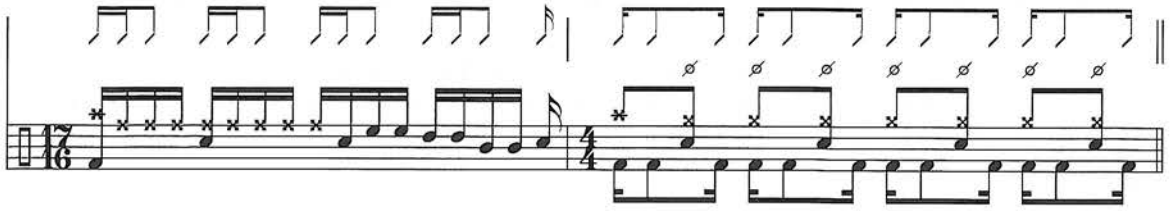
Mike modulates back to the original tempo a few measures later, with the dotted quarter note becoming the dotted 8th note. (0:13)

6



To change things again, one 16th note is added to the measure, producing a bar of 17/16. Then Mike moves to a double-time feel that follows the constant rhythm of the guitar. (0:34)

7

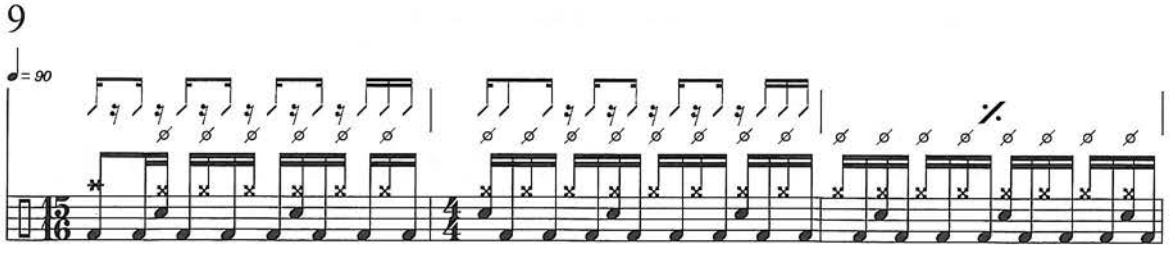


Another example of metric modulation occurs in the song "This Dying Soul," from the album *Train Of Thought*. First, Mike solos under the guitar riff for four bars. Then he modulates to a slower tempo with a deep, crunchy groove. Here the original quarter note becomes the dotted 8th note. (6:31)

8

Mike is always exploring different ways to play over a guitar riff. In the *Train Of Thought* track "Honor Thy Father," he incorporates three different feels over the guitar ostinato. Initially the guitar sounds like it's phrased on the beat until Mike establishes a double-time groove in the fifth bar. But the off-beat guitar phrasing isn't *completely* apparent until Mike slams out the half-time feel in measure 9. (0:13)

9



Mike Portnoy

Dream Theater is known for their complex unison figures, and Mike always finds cool ways to play off of them. In the instrumental track "Stream Of Consciousness," from *Train Of Thought*, the unison hits sound random. But when Mike lays down a killer groove in the fifth bar, everything falls into place. (3:04)

10

In the song "The Dance Of Eternity," from the disc *Metropolis Pt. 2: Scenes From A Memory*, the unison figure sounds like the first four notes of a 16th-note triplet. However, once Mike comes in with the tom groove, the true rhythm is clear. (1:44)

11

Mike also has many ways to spice up triple meters such as 12/8 and 6/8. Often times he uses the ride cymbal to play syncopated rhythms while the bass drum and snare lay down a steady shuffle pattern. Here's an example from the title track of the album *A Change Of Seasons*. (10:31)

12

And here's another example, which occurs in the song "Take The Time," from *Images & Words*. (3:00)

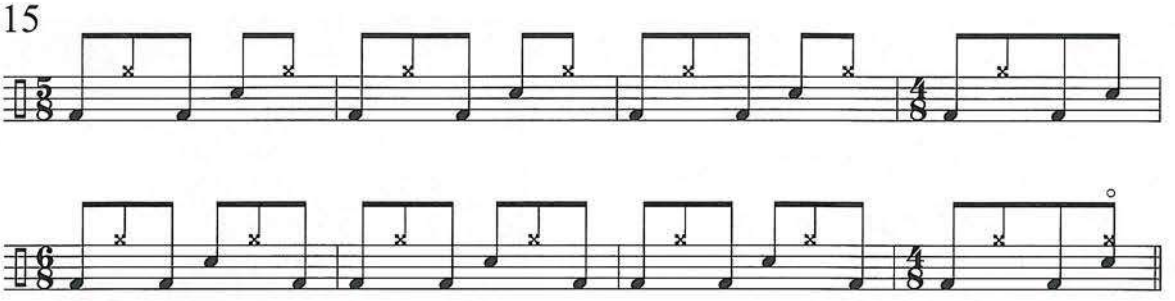
13

The next two examples are both from the *Images & Words* track "Learning To Live." In Example 14, Mike shifts the snare to align with the ride cymbal. (7:37)

14

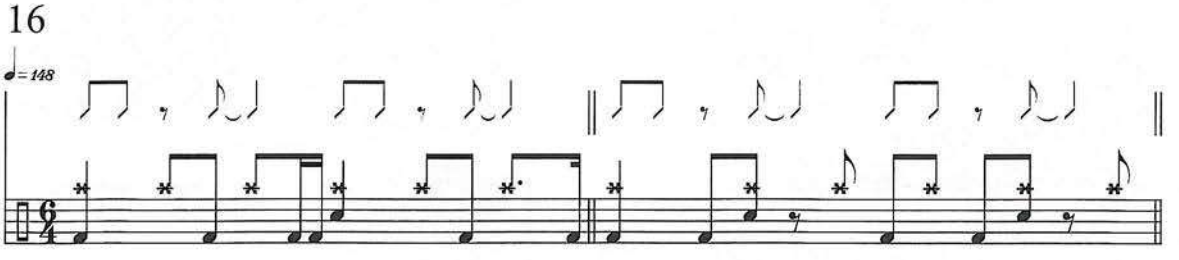
Later on, he modifies one of his favorite off-beat ride patterns to fit over the time signature changes. (8:26)

15



The last aspect of Mike's playing we'll examine is how he implies a triplet feel (6/8 or 12/8) over a duple rhythm (4/4 or 6/4). These ideas are tricky, so be careful not to lose your place. In "This Dying Soul," there's a strong half-time feel in the first measure. Then, when the snare lines up with the guitar a few seconds later, the groove jumps to a 6/8 feel. (1:44)

16



Mike Portnoy

"Take The Time" also has some great examples of the concept, occurring at 1:03, 4:37, and 8:01 respectively. Good luck!

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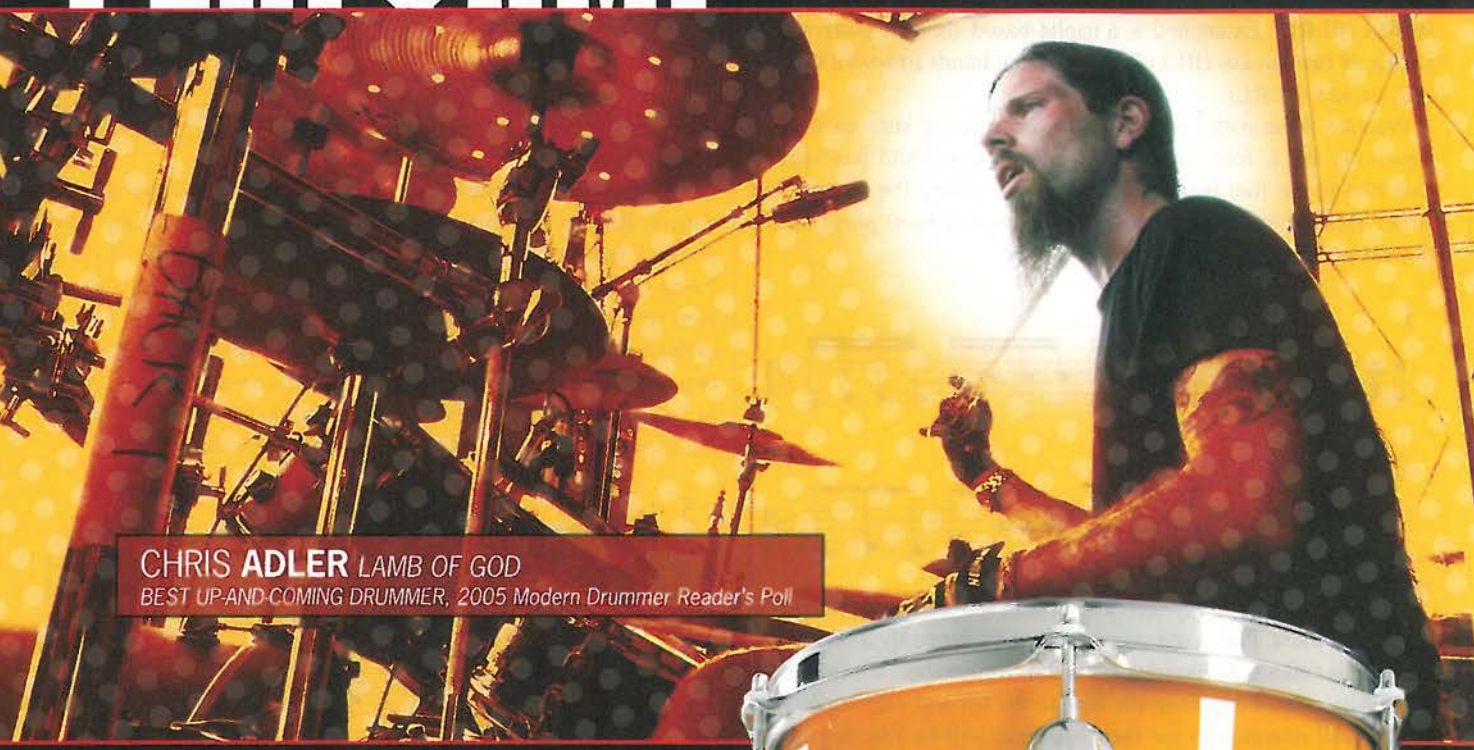

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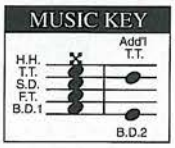
Double Bass Drumming
Part 8: More Fills

by Rod Morgenstein



Last month's double bass focus was on two basic fill patterns. One was a four-note hand/foot pattern and the other was a six-note hand/foot pattern. Each of those fills consisted of playing two consecutive notes on the bass drums (or double bass pedal), namely RL.

This month we're going to deal with playing *four* consecutive notes (RLRL) with the feet. Once again, all of the fills in this article are based on two hand/foot patterns, which are found in Examples 1 and 2. Example 1 is a 16th-note pattern consisting of four strokes (RLRL) played with the hands, followed by four foot strokes (RLRL). Example 2 is a triplet-based six-note pattern consisting of two strokes (RL) played with the hands followed by four foot strokes (RLRL).

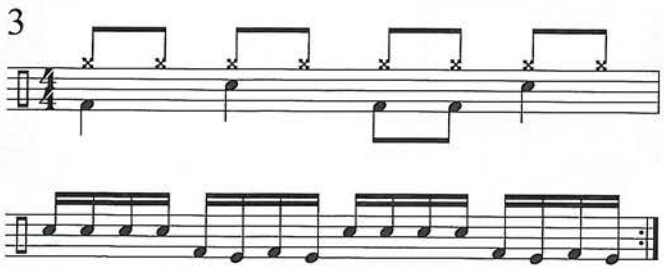
Practice these patterns over and over, making sure each note, especially the L foot, is given equal emphasis. And pay special attention to the foot pattern in Example 2, where the second foot stroke (played with the L, which is the weaker foot) plays on the downbeat of beats 2 and 4.

1

2

As we discussed in my last article, fills should be practiced in a musical context. Play a one-measure beat followed by a one-measure fill, as follows in Examples 3 and 4. Remember, it's important to transition smoothly from the beat to the fill and vice-versa. And pay special attention to the fact that there will be five bass drum strokes (RLRLR) as the fill transitions back into the beat. The bass drum stroke on the downbeat of the groove (the fifth foot stroke) should be spot on.

3



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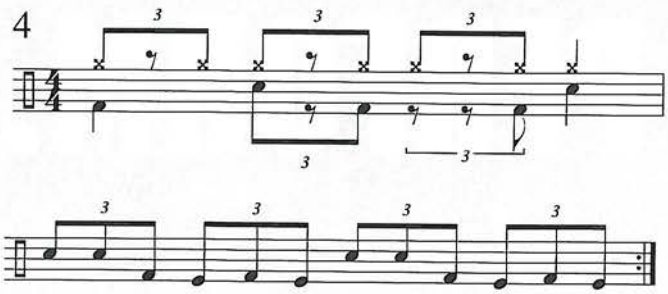
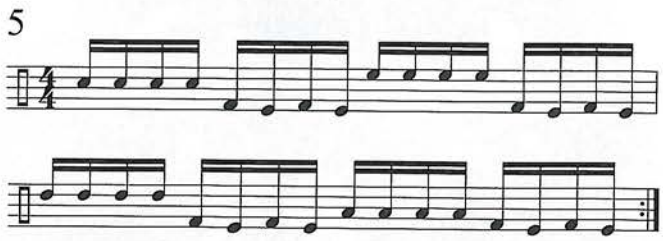


The beauty of drumming is, once you have a specific hand/foot pattern, the sky's the limit in terms of orchestrating it on the drumset. One lick can yield an endless array of fills. Examples 5–13 are based on Example 1. (Examples 12 and 13 reverse the hands and feet, so the fill begins with four foot strokes.) Examples 14–17 are orchestrations of Example 2. These patterns involve playing one, two, or four notes per drum surface, and move around the drumset in various directions. Turn these fills into musical phrases by playing a one- or two-measure beat followed by the fill.

5



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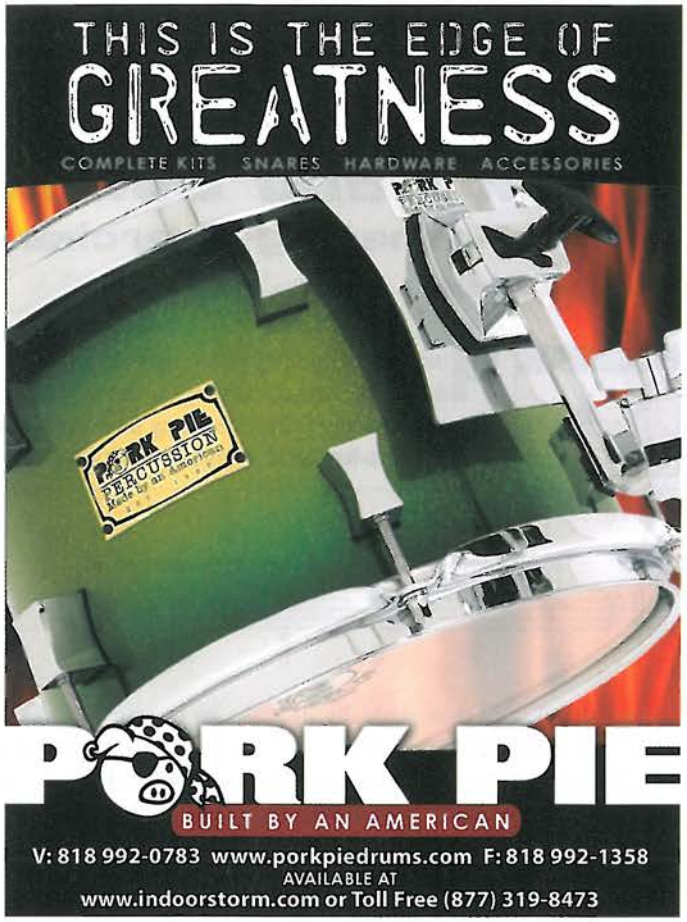
7

8

Next time we'll move on to fills that are somewhat more challenging. Drum on!

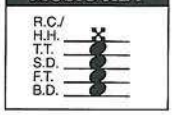


Weak Hand Double Strokes

A Strengthening Exercise

by Ed Breckenfeld

MUSIC KEY

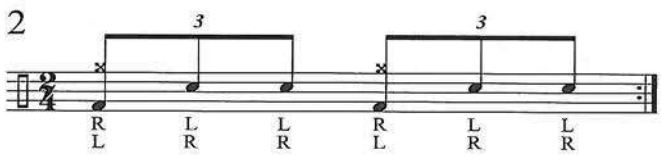


Here's a terrific little exercise that can help strengthen the control of a weak hand. Using a combination of single and double strokes, it focuses energy by working the weak hand twice as much as the stronger one. Right-handed players use the top sticking, left-handers the bottom.

1

Start slowly, and then gradually increase up to your top speed. Make certain that all strokes are played with equal intensity and that the rhythm remains smooth and continuous as you take it faster. Once you're comfortable with a good rate of speed on the previous pattern, apply it to the drumset and move the double strokes around the drums. The exercise now becomes more fun and challenging while working the double-stroke hand even harder.

2



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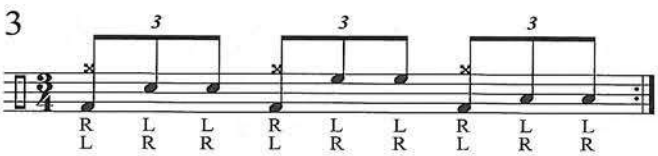
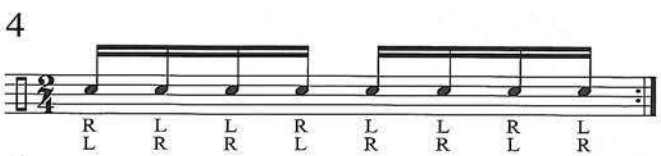


The next step is to add a pair of single strokes to bring the exercise into a 16th-note rhythm. Once again, develop the pattern on the snare drum first and then add it to the kit.

4



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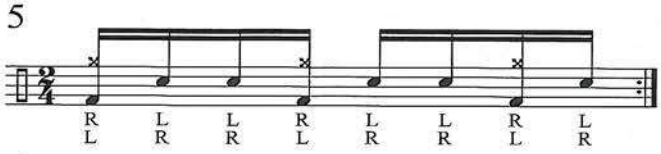

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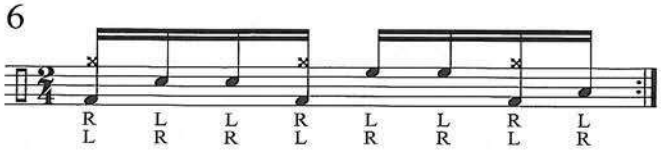
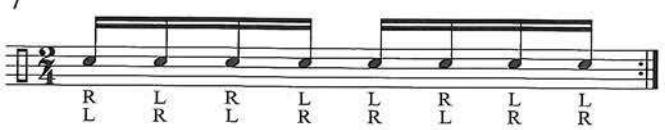


Here are a couple of sticking variations that add interest to the drumset versions.

7



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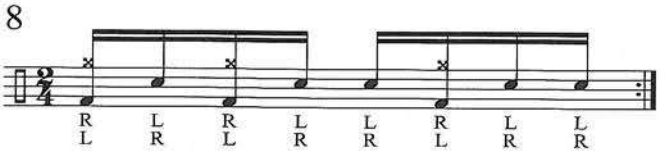

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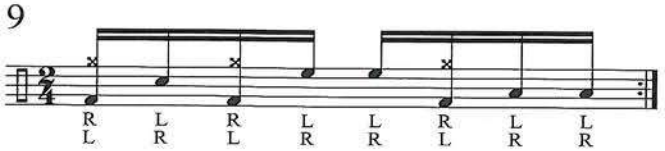

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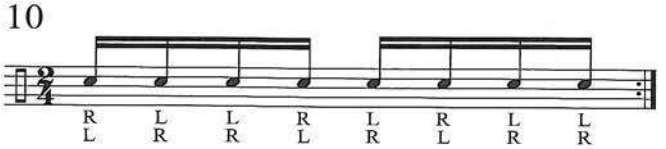

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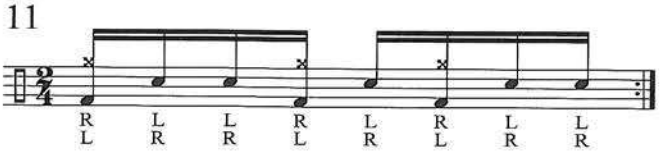

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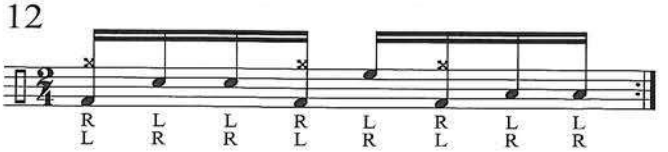
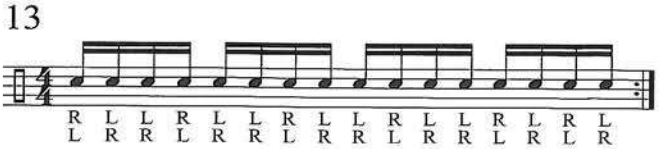


Now we'll double the length of the pattern for a different effect.

13



14

15

16

The drumset movement variations on these exercises are unlimited. Use your imagination, try these patterns as many ways as you can think of, and have fun. All the while, that weak hand will be getting stronger!

Ed Breckenfeld is a long-time Chicago-area drummer and drum instructor who records and performs with various midwestern artists including The Insiders, The Cathy Richardson Band, and Jim Peterik's World Stage. Ed can be reached through his Web site, www.edbreckenfeld.com.

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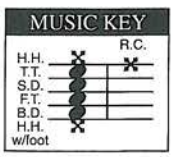
Vodou Rhythms For Drumset

by James Armstrong and Travis Knepper



Vodou. To many, this word conjures up visions of black magic, pin dolls, and walking zombies. These conceptions, however, could not be further from the truth. Vodou is a deeply rooted religious belief system that encompasses rich and complex traditions. Present-day Vodou evolved from West African religious beliefs, Roman Catholicism, and the influences of Haiti's first indigenous culture, the Tiano-Arawak Indian tribe.

In this article, we'll explore the Haitian Vodou rhythm "Yanvalou" (yan-va-loo) on the drumset. We'll start with a brief overview of the traditional rhythm, then apply Yanvalou to the drumset, and finally tie the rhythm to a couple of common styles.

Traditional Yanvalou

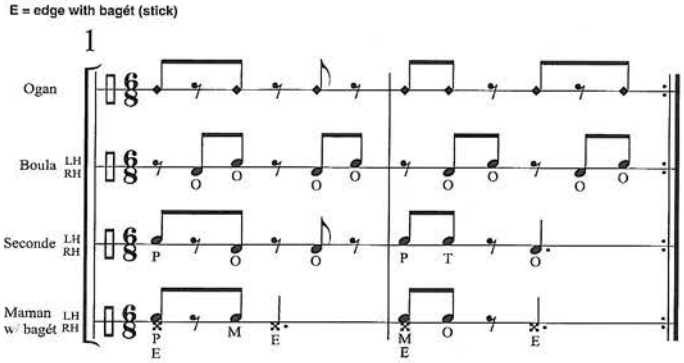
Throughout the course of a Vodou ceremony, specific rhythms are played in honor of various deities, or ancestors, and are accompanied by appropriate songs and dances. Although most commonly found at the beginning of the ceremony, several versions of Yanvalou may be played and danced throughout the event.

Below is an ensemble transcription of "Yanvalou Franc," or "Simple Yanvalou," in its most basic form. The traditional drum ensemble used for this style consists of the boula (high-pitched supporting drum), seconde (middle-pitched supporting drum), maman (low-pitched lead drum), and ogan (metallic instrument, often a hoe blade).

The ogan, or bell, plays a vital role in the ensemble. It functions as the ongoing timeline, which is often referred to as the bell pattern or clave. The underlying rhythmic pattern played on the ogan keeps all other parts in check and is considered the "glue" that holds the music together.

Key
O = open
M = muffled
P = palm
T = touch
E = edge with bagét (stick)

1



Simple Yanvalou On The Drumset

Once you understand how each part functions in the traditional ensemble, you can orchestrate those parts on the drumset. The easiest way is to find the most common pitch relationships. For example, the ogan is a metallic instrument, so it makes sense to apply it to the ride cymbal, hi-hat, or cowbell. The boula is the highest-pitched drum, so it translates well to a rack tom or snare drum.

In the following example, the ogan pattern is played on the hi-hat and the boula pattern is played on the snare drum. We've also added the bass drum to establish a strong pulse.

2

This next example orchestrates the open tones of the seconde and maman patterns between the rack tom and floor tom, with the ogan pattern on the ride cymbal. Some of the palm and muffled tones from the maman pattern are played on the bass drum.

3

Now, try leaving out your left hand and orchestrate the ogan rhythm between the ride cymbal, rack tom, and floor tom. By orchestrating the ogan pattern this way, you're able to maintain the pulse of the bell pattern while also covering the maman and seconde open tones with the same hand. To make it more interesting, the maman bagét part is played with the hi-hat and bass drum.

4

In Example 5, we've added the boula part on the snare drum with the left hand. This pattern combines all the elements of the traditional Yanvalou ensemble.

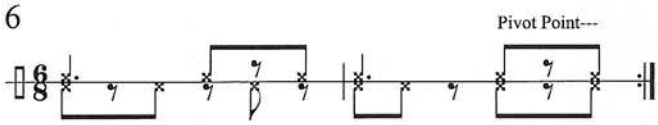
5

Contemporary Applications

Hopefully we've gotten your creative juices flowing and you have a few ideas of your own based on the traditional Vodou pattern. There are endless possibilities for new grooves. But how are you going to use them on a gig? And how do these new grooves relate to patterns that you already know? The key is to look for a common thread between the new ideas and patterns you're familiar with.

The example below shows the relationship between the swing ride pattern (stems up) and the Yanvalou bell pattern (stems down). Notice the pivot point at the end of the phrase, where both rhythms are exactly the same. This is the easiest place to switch between the two rhythms, rather than at the beginning of the phrase.

6



Use the following exercise to practice the transition from a swing ride pattern to the Yanvalou bell pattern.

7

After mastering this exercise, while keeping the time and feel consistent, begin to add the left hand into the groove. In Example 8, a snare drum shuffle pattern is added into the mix.

8

From here, it's up to you to experiment and expand on these concepts. Use your creativity and search for even more modern variations that inject Yanvalou into your grooves.

Do-It-Yourself Percussion

The Mani-Tom

by Glenn Kotche

This column is dedicated to providing drummers and percussionists with simple and inexpensive do-it-yourself projects for building and modifying instruments and accessories. This month's project is the Mani-Tom.

The Mani-Tom is created by passing a length of clear vinyl tubing through the vent hole of a floor or mounted tom.

Probably the most frequently asked question I get about my kit is about a set of tubes that are attached to the toms. People see me blowing in them while playing, and they can't figure out what it is that I'm doing. I'm quick to point out that this idea is not my own. I was lucky enough to read about it in an old interview with Mani Neumeier, the renowned drummer for the Germa band Guru Guru. He describes his invention as an air hose attached to a mounted tom, allowing him to change the pitch of the tom at will, simply by blowing air into it while playing.

The hose or tubing can be attached to any drum that has a vent hole. When you blow into the tube and force air into the drum, the added air pressure increases the tension of the heads and raises the pitch of the drum. When you stop blowing, the pressure returns to normal, lowering the raised pitch and giving the impression that the drum pitch itself has been lowered. In actuality, you can only *raise* the pitch with the Mani-Tom method. But you get a timpani-like pitch-bending sound nonetheless.

The only thing you need to make your own Mani-Tom is a length of flexible plastic or rubber tubing, which is available at any hardware store. I prefer the clear type in about a 4' length. Most drums have a vent hole that a $^{3}/_{8}$" outside x $^{1}/_{4}$" inside diameter hose will fit into perfectly. These lengths of tubing are extremely inexpensive and will last a long time with proper care and rinsing.

When you get the tubing home, simply insert one end into the vent hole, and you're set. I've never found a need to secure the hose to the drum; it should fit snugly enough in the vent hole to stay put. Also, it's important to note that I've never noticed a negative effect on the sustain or tone of a drum by having a hose inserted in its vent.

When you blow into the hose, the pitch of the drum will raise. When you stop blowing, the drum will return to normal. (This is assuming that there are no other holes in the drum that allow the air to escape.) I usually attach a hose to each mounted tom and floor tom, and I keep the blowing ends of them taped together so I can use them all simultaneously. It is possible to hold a certain pitch or pressure longer if you stop up the end of the hose with your tongue or by biting down on the end so as to keep the air from escaping.

Although this is a special effect that not everyone will be interested in, it does enable us to get a rolling, swooping color that's similar to a timpani glissando.

If you'd like to hear an audio example, check out the song "Reservations" from Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* record. You can hear the bending rolls on floor toms thanks to the Mani-Tom.

Glenn Kotche is the drummer/percussionist for eclectic rock band Wilco. He was most recently featured in the January '05 issue of MD.

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Home Recording For Drummers

Part 4: Chris's Home-Recording Examples

by Chris Vrenna

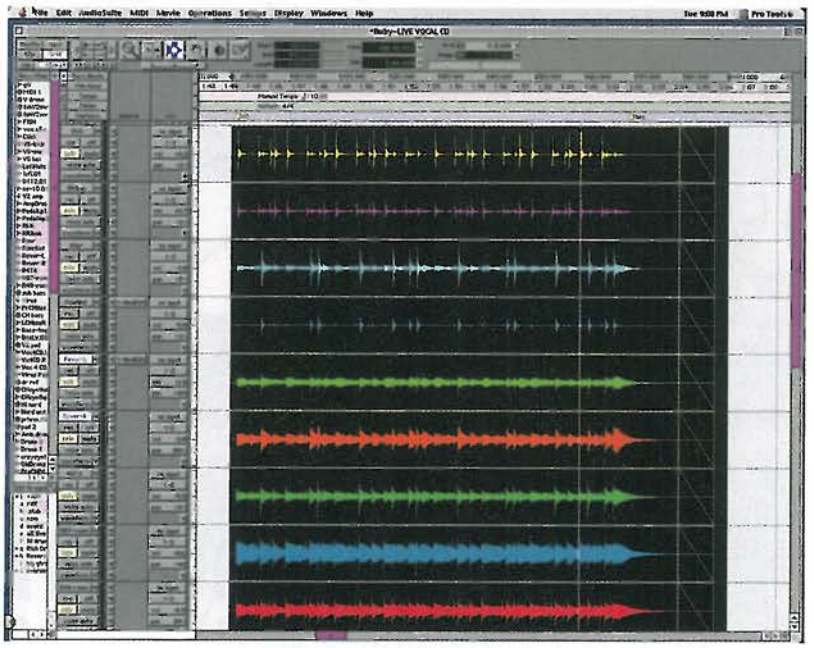
Hello again. I hope you've been having fun making some recordings. I thought this might be a good point to stop and enjoy the fruits of our labors from our first three discussions.

As I've mentioned, I too record all of my own drums at home for my band tweaker, as well as for other projects I may be working on. Let's rest our brains from all the tech talk, leave our newly padded bedroom studios, and enjoy some fresh air out on the patio, while I show you how I've used what we've been talking about with a few specific examples from tweaker.

To hear examples of all the sounds we'll be talking about in this article, just go to www.moderndrummer.com, and click on the corresponding icons, the titles of which will appear in brackets in this text. I'm also including screen captures of the Pro Tools files here so you can see what they look like on screen. We'll pick up with our originally scheduled discussion next issue.

For the new tweaker CD, I wanted to have as much live drum performance as possible, with a minimum of editing. I also wanted to bridge the sound from the first, more electronic record into the new one. I did this in the leadoff track "ruby" by using a simple, old-school drum machine beat that then explodes without warning into big live garage drums. [At www.moderndrummer.com, check out ruby_vs.mp3 and ruby_chs.mp3.]

ruby_livedrums



You can see the simple track layout to the live drums in the screen capture below, titled ruby_livedrums. To get that big bombastic sound, we used a combination of close mic's and three mono ambient room mic's. We placed one behind me, and the other two in areas of the room that simply sounded the best. Experiment with your room mic's. Each mic' and each room will sound different, so move them around and use your ears. If you like the sound, then go for it!

Next up is the song "truth is" [online at truthis_CH_livedrums.mp3]. This was one of my favorites to record. I love the simple beat. This is a complete live drum performance, including a live shaker track and some fancy editing. Let's break this performance down so you can hear the individual elements that make it up.

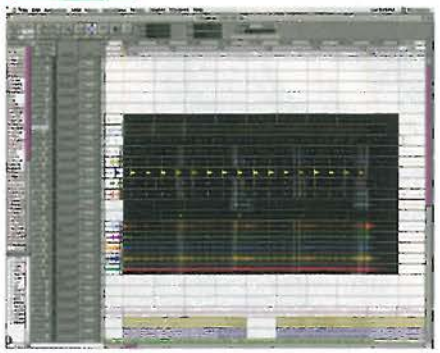
First, listen to truthis_mics Only.mp3. This is the live mic's from my tiny bedroom. Next, listen to truthis_ns10mic.mp3. This is that speaker trick I mentioned in Part 1 of this series (March 2005 *MD*). You'll notice it's all low-end thump. Lastly, I used a Pro Tools plugin called Sound Replacer, which allows you to replace sounds in an audio track with any other sound. In this case, I copied the close snare and kick mic's and then used this plugin to add more "hi fi" samples. Lastly I mixed all the mic's and samples.

I wanted to achieve a simple DJ scratch-type effect rather than play fills on every four. To do this all I did was edit the beat or beats I wanted to flip, and then reverse-process them. Every DAW software should have a simple reverse effect built in. A tip here: When you perform any process like this, the DAW software will make a new audio file. You may hear clicks or pops over this new edit. That's bad! I always make the piece I want to process a little longer than needed. This will buy you the extra length of audio to cross-fade back into the adjoining regions.

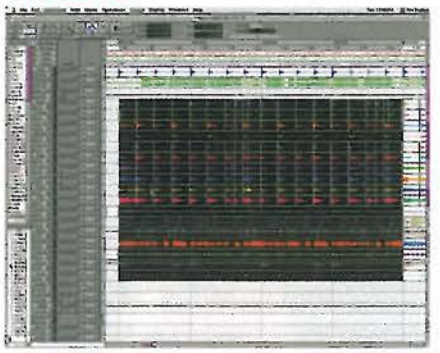
I wanted to have loops made from my drumming, not from sample CDs. I would play beats and then process them to use or layer in verses. [Online, check out truthis_vs_loop.mp3.] This is one mic' that I ran through an old guitar pedal. You can use software plugins, pedals, outboard effects units...try them all!

Next let's look at the song "worse than yesterday." This song is based entirely around an odd rhythmic noise

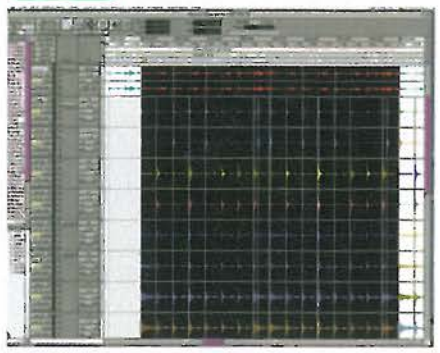
truth is drums



truthis_ch



worse beat



loop. To lift the chorus, I added a roomy live beat over the loop. The mp3 file worse_CH_noLoop.mp3 features the live drumkit, and on worse_CH_withLoop.mp3 you can hear how the loop and the live drums fit together.

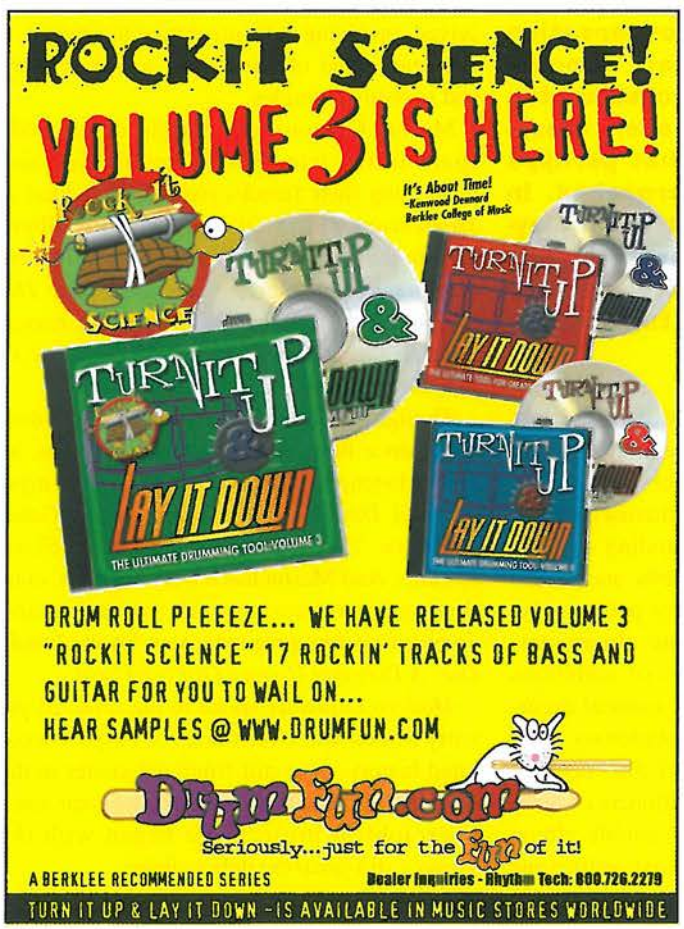
You'll notice in the screen capture for "worse than yesterday" that there is a heavy amount of editing done to the drums. Since the drums had to groove with the loop that runs the entire song, I had to edit every hit to make sure it lines up perfectly, with no flamming between the two. If you want to add loops or additional MIDI programming, you will always have to do some editing so all the hits line up. One performance, either live drums or loops, must be the guide. I usually like to play to the loops as I record, to get the groove right. But after I get my final take, I edit the loop to me. This way the loops pick up my human variations. However, in the case of "worse than yesterday," I edited the drums to the loop since it runs the entire song and is the overall groove basis.

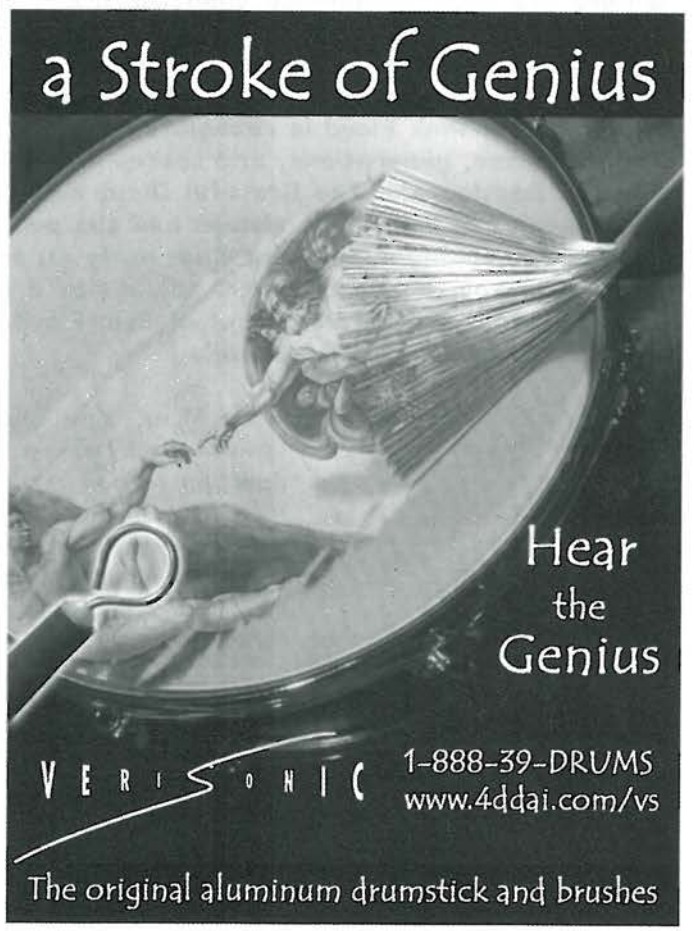
Next check out the sound file worse_brg_beat.mp3. This is again one mic' in my hallway that I pitch-shifted down and then drenched in reverb to use in the breakdown. Even though it's processed, you can still tell it's a live drum performance.

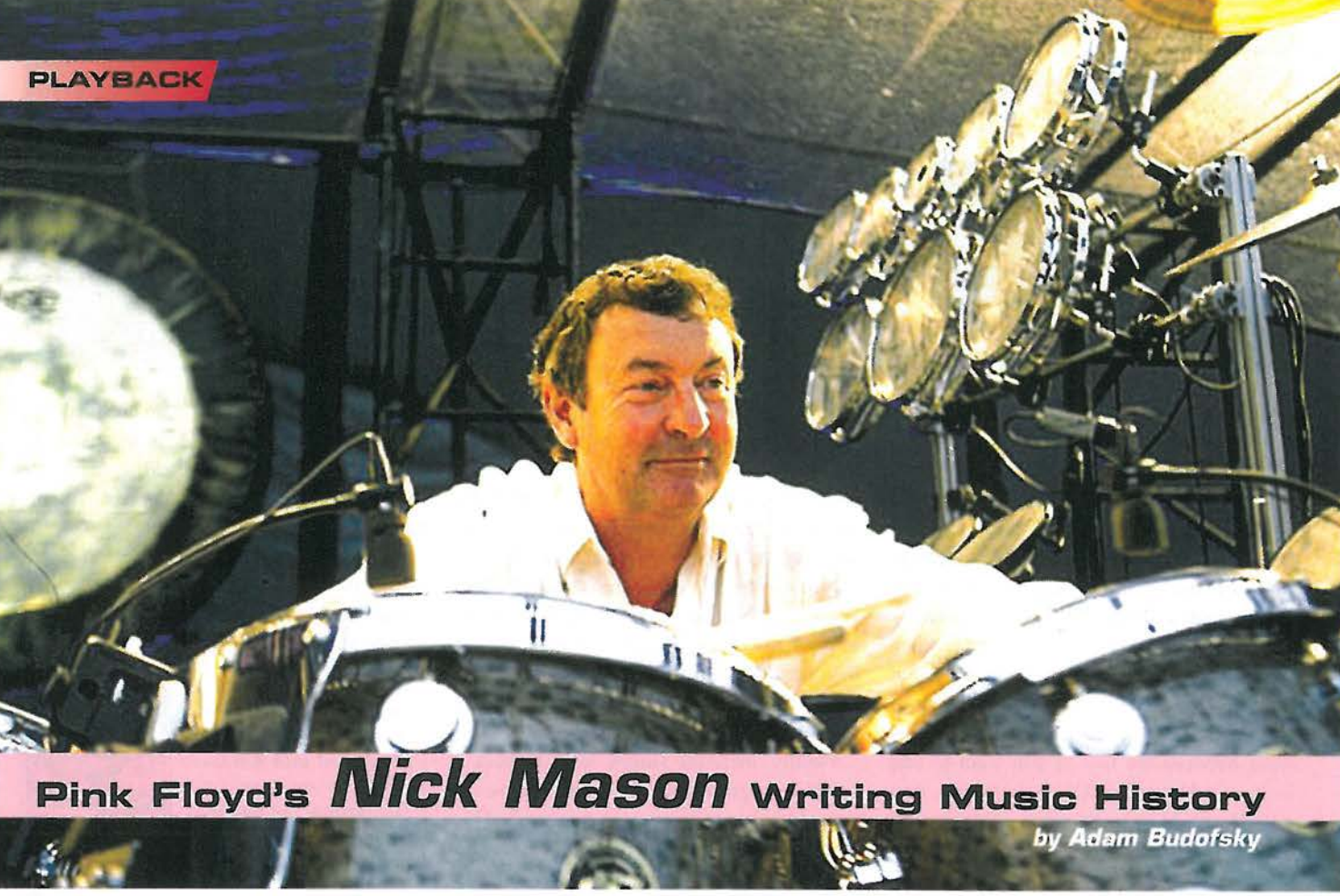
Finally, there are simple ways to trick a mostly programmed track into sounding more live. Listen to pure_vs_beat.mp3. This is the main verse beat for the song "pure genius." The kick and snare are actually brush samples from the SampleTank plugin. However, the ride cymbal is an unedited live performance. The variation of the hits, and the room air that the mic's add, give a more live feel. I find this trick works best with hihats, ride cymbals, and crashes.

I hope you enjoyed being able to hear to results of some of the processes we've discussed so far. Next time we'll look at more editing and MIDI. See you then.

Chris Vrenna is the former drummer with Nine Inch Nails. He has also produced and remixed tracks for many top acts, has written the music to a popular video game, and leads his own critically acclaimed band, tweaker.







Pink Floyd's Nick Mason Writing Music History

by Adam Budofsky

There are rock bands—and then there are musical institutions. As the first chapter in any serious conversation about psychedelic rock, modern studio production, groundbreaking live theatrics, and record-breaking stretches on the album charts, Pink Floyd is recognized the world over, crossing boundaries, generations, and tastes in ways that perhaps only The Beatles and The Grateful Dead ever approached. In Nick Mason the band have always had the perfect team player. Whether openly supporting their early experiments in psychedelic improv, or wallopping stadium-size 2 and 4 on later works, Mason abetted dozens of classic Floyd cuts, many of which remain staples of rock radio.

Nick Mason, bassist Roger Waters, guitarist David Gilmour, and keyboardist Rick Wright dealt with their share of diversity over the years, struggling to redefine themselves following the breakdown of founding musical genius Syd Barrett in the late '60s, and weathering the legal hassles of a very public early-'80s breakup. But the music always triumphed. In the '70s, a series of ambitious projects featuring long, moody musical excursions culminated with the revolutionary *Dark Side Of The Moon* album. *Dark Side* cemented Floyd's rep as the top practitioners of modern cosmic rock, and 1979's double album *The Wall* represented the most ambitious multi-media project a rock band had ever conceived, involving a disintegrating theater set, a surrogate band of musicians, a feature film, and several hit singles.

Mason, Gilmour, and Wright defied odds again in the late '80s by regrouping and recharging their famous road show behind *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*, a hit album despite the absence of Waters, who was their main songwriter. Seven years later came *The Division Bell*, another hit, and another reason to bring the unique Pink Floyd experience to old and new fans across the globe.

Though the band has been somewhat dormant since then, their popularity remains, as young listeners continue to discover the mysteries of *Dark Side*, *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, *The Wall*, and other classic Floyd releases. And Mason has hardly been lax, continuing his obsession with car racing and completing his gorgeous new book, *Inside Out: A Personal History Of Pink Floyd*.

Modern Drummer spoke to the reserved yet witty Mason while memories of Floyd's decorated history were still front and center in the drummer's mind, following the two-year autobiographical project. We began with the group's still-amazing debut album.

The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn (1967)

Most of the recording techniques we used at the beginning were pretty tried and tested. I do have to say that the early drum recordings were pretty good. There was a style of recording drumkits at the time, which is still prevalent, where they dampen the bass drum very heavily—in fact, most of the kit—and then if necessary put reverb on artificially. I think that's the thing that I always like about recording: The drums always sounded really electric, rather than the way they normally do in an acoustic environment.

A Saucerful Of Secrets (1968)

On the title track to *Saucer*, there's a drum loop in the middle section. I played a bunch and then we took four bars and looped them and made that the rhythm track. We used to play that live, but the studio version sort of works better because it has a slightly more mechanical feel to it. That loop is double-tracked as well, again, to make it sound more mechanical. We got into loops quite heavily because we learned the techniques from [Pink Floyd collaborator] Ron Geesin. Other bands must have been doing loops at the time too. It was certainly something that everyone at EMI [studios] knew how to do.

Ummagumma (1969)

The idea of us each having a solo section on *Ummagumma* is interesting to students of Floyd history, but it was sort of a cul de sac. I think it proves that we make better records working together. I feel Roger's section is stronger than the others, though I suppose it depends on what you like. The album is quite interesting, though I'm not sure it's that entertaining, because a lot of it is sound experiments rather than pieces of music. In terms of my section [see "The Grand Vizier's Garden Party" in the Any Color You Like sidebar], I've just very rarely found drum solos interesting. They tend to be gymnastic exercises, which can be entertaining in their own right. But that sort of fifteen-minute thrash-around, it's more like professional wrestling than music.

Atom Heart Mother (1970)

It seems completely insane now, but we did the [twenty-three-minute] title track all in one pass. It was to do with the technical thinking at the time, which said that it was dangerous to edit the tape. We should at least have done cross-fades.

I once received an email asking, If you had the chance to go back and redo, let's say, "Saucer," what would you change? And the answer is, I think you wouldn't change anything, because your efforts would be far better spent doing something new and leaving whatever you've done the way you did it. Hopefully Leonardo wouldn't go back and make the smile on the Mona Lisa's face a little bit brighter.

Jill Furmanovsky

Nick On His Kits

Any self-respecting Pink Floyd freak has spent hours staring at the photo on the back of the band's infamous half studio/half live double album, *Ummagumma*. The symmetrically displayed collection of band gear actually looks modest by today's standards. But in 1969 the spread of amps, keyboards, guitars, and of course drums, topped off by a gong perched on top of the group's van, looked damn impressive.

Thereafter, fans glimpsed Nick Mason sitting behind some of the coolest drumkits in rock, generally a setup consisting of two bass drums, two rack toms, and two floor toms, finished in a variety of gorgeous custom paint jobs and fitted with killer graphics on the front bass drum heads.

Following is Nick Mason in his own words describing the drumkits he's used over the years, as well as his cymbal and accessory choices. You can see great shots of many of Nick's sets in his new book, *Inside Out: A Personal History Of Pink Floyd*.

I started with an assortment of cheap stuff. I think the snare was a Gigster. I've no idea who was responsible for the rest.

Next was a Premier silver sparkle kit. This did most of the first year. But of course I'd spotted Ginger Baker playing Ludwig, so while we were on tour in the USA, it was down to Manny's in New York for a silver sparkle Ludwig set [shown here, from the back of *Ummagumma*]. I've still got this kit, although it has since been repainted with the Hokusai wave design. It did most of the '73 *Dark Side* shows and is now retired to my office.

I tried a transparent Fibes kit some time in the early '70s. Graeme Fleming, our lighting designer, loved it for the lighting effects, such as revolving beacons placed in the bass drums. But it was a little too reverberant. I later sold the set to Graeme.

I stayed with Ludwig for a long time, and I still count Bill Ludwig III as a dear friend. A visit to the factory and dinner with Bill and his wife, Lisa, was always a great part of the tour. But the factory couldn't really compete against the Far East imports, and I think Bill had to sell up.

After that it was inevitably Drum Workshop. Their attention to detail is superb, and they went to enormous trouble on both of the last tours to help select the drums, achieve the finish (gray bird's-eye maple), and sort out all the fittings with my drum tech, Clive Brooks. I am now playing a different DW kit since the original had a very hard working life with a lot of (wet) open-air shows, which really are hard on a kit.

I've been a Paiste endorser since our Montreaux Jazz Festival gig in the very early '70s, and I still have a lot of my early cymbals, which I love the sound of. The 2002 range *still* sounds great. I think I've played virtually every size and shape of bell, gong, and cymbal that they made over the years!

I'm also a Latin Percussion endorser, and I've used all sorts of weird instruments on various albums, more for sound effects than for rhythms. And Pro-Mark has made a specific stick model for me for the last twenty-odd years.

Obscured By Clouds (1972)

This was one of the first times I used electronic percussion, on the title track. I can't remember what they were called. I do know they weren't Syndrums. They just made a perfectly ordinary sort of "bonging" noise. We probably treated the sound in the mix as well. I think we used those electronic drums for a while. Over the years we used relatively small amounts of electronic drums, until the more recent tours, when we would sample effects and all sorts of stuff. But before then it tended to be acoustic.

In fact, there were quite a lot of acoustic things hung around. On one occasion when we played "Saucer" at the Albert Hall I had a complete octave-and-a-half set of tuned gongs, which was fantastic. We had a great rack with gongs strung across—actually it was two racks at three heights. Bloody hard work scampering backwards and forwards, but I was a lot younger then.

Any Color You Like

Nick Mason is not known as a chops-blasting showman. But as a musician with an ability to see the big picture and expertly support the music with a unique part, he has few peers. Spend some time with Pink Floyd's classic albums, and you'll discover a number of tracks that are fun to check out from a drum angle.

"Lucifer Sam"

This Syd Barrett gem from Pink Floyd's debut, *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, features Nick playing an upbeat bass drum, providing a unique heaviness to the track.

"A Saucerful Of Secrets"

The title track from Pink Floyd's second album is classic early Nick. The exciting version on Floyd's *Live At Pompeii* DVD finds Nick beautifully accelerating the deceptively simple "linear" beat. The kicker is during the beginning of the second part, after the "storm," where Mason takes the Zen route and accompanies with a simple hi-hat chick on 2 and 4.

"The Grand Vizier's Garden Party"

Nick's contribution to the studio half of 1969's double album *Ummagumma* presented him with an opportunity to take center stage. Rather than follow the typical path and spew a collection of licks, the drummer sets up a unique musical environment through the use of tape delay, overdubs, and odd rhythmic devices.

"Country Song"

The drums on this unused song from the soundtrack to the 1970 film *Zabriskie Point* don't seem particularly special—until you notice that there are two distinct drumkit tracks, with noticeably unique sounds. Floyd employed this trick to good effect several times over the years. (See "Have A Cigar.")

"Echoes"

Pink Floyd made a major stylistic leap forward with this sidelong track from 1971's *Meddle* album. After the quintessentially spacey first part, focus on the funky second section (7:01). You think it's easy to just sit on this groove for five minutes and make it feel good? Think again.

"Time"

As Roger Waters says in the *Dark Side Of The Moon: Classic Albums* DVD, when you hear the RotoTom intro to "Time" today, it's striking how long the band let it go on before slamming into the main part of the song. Like the skittering hi-hat on the album's previous track, "On The Run," it's impossible to imagine any other drum part being more appropriate here.

"Have A Cigar"

Nick's slinky beat perfectly sets up this famous Floyd number, a stab at sleazy record-company types. At 3:17, a neat thing happens: Nick goes to double time on the hi-hats. What's so cool about that? Listen carefully: Now the hats are an overdub. You notice this if you pay attention to the syncopated snare hits and tom fills, which don't interrupt the flow of the hats. Other drummers might have gotten off on figuring out how to play the whole thing in one pass, but that would have forced a totally different feel on the track.

"The Hero's Return"

Roger Waters' final recording with Pink Floyd, 1983's *The Final Cut*, was a sparse, emotionally raw affair. Continuing with the stomping, stripped-down beats he pounded out on its predecessor, *The Wall*, Nick Mason framed Waters' lyrics with minimalist slabs of rhythm. "The Hero's Return" is a typical example: No ride source needed here, just a slightly twisted snare/bass heartbeat, one simple but shocking *BLAP-bum BLAP-bum bum* exclamation point, and some cool backwards cymbals.

The Dark Side Of The Moon (1973)

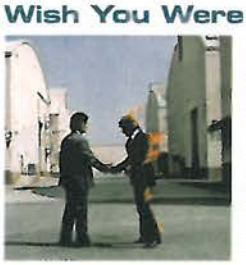
We were always credited with using more technology than we really did. Quite a lot of our effects and sounds are fairly straightforward. As I said in the book, we only got into having a Moog on stage when they produced the Mini-Moog. Likewise, almost all of the drums on *Dark Side* were recorded in a very straightforward way, as cleanly as possible. I'm sure it would have been a standard mic' setup. I think they used an AKG D12 for the bass drum, and a pair of Neumann 67s or 87s over the top, which are lovely microphones. You get a very clear, rich sound out of them. But I don't think we did anything particularly clever.

I do recall that the RotoToms at the start of "Time" were done as a separate piece and added to the beginning of the song. I think they'd been rented by someone doing a session at the studio. So we came across them and thought, "Oh, let's have a go with these." We probably fiddled with the tuning, but we would only have tuned them to make sure they didn't sound totally discordant. It wasn't as though they were tuned to a scale, and they were certainly not played with any melody in mind.

For the opening cut, "Speak To Me," I made some of the loops at home. We talked about it being sort of an overture to the album. So all the voices that come in are snatches of virtually every track on the record.

I was talking to Roger, and he reminded me that at one point either he, or we—the jury's still out on that one [laughs]—had also experimented with things like striking a cymbal and then dipping it in water.

Wish You Were Here (1975)



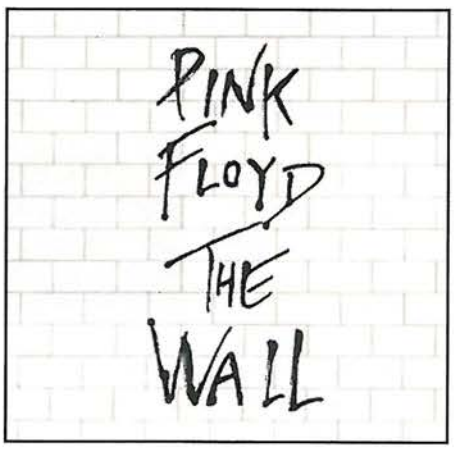
That's a funny record. Some of it was quite hard to make. It took a while to settle into what it actually was and how it was going to be constructed. *Dark Side* was probably easier in that respect. In a funny way it's almost mellowed with time, I suppose. If I listen to it I tend to think it's sort of almost too drawn out, that some ideas are recycled unnecessarily and that it would have benefited from a few more musical ideas.

Animals (1977)

Animals was quite a raw recording, because we had just finished building our studio, Britannia Row. I don't think we were particularly influenced by punk, but I think there was a feeling of it being more of a band-type album.

The Wall (1979)

That album was made under pressure. It kicked off relatively easily, but as time went by and we realized just how much stuff there was to do—as it became clear it was a double album and there were to be strings and arrangements and the like—the idea of bringing in other people seemed like an excellent solution.



Roger had in mind all sorts of elements of *The Wall* prior to us recording anything. So even as the album was being recorded we were thinking about the staging, which we had to start building in the spring in order to have it ready for Christmas.

That album is much more sophisticated than our previous ones. I think that's partly Roger's ideas, but it was also Dave's and Rick's. I think everyone's influence is clear. There are many new faces as well. Bob Ezrin was our first outside producer since Norman Smith in the early days, and James Guthrie was a hot young engineer, after a lot of years of us using more classically trained engineers.

The Drummer As Producer

Robert Wyatt: Rock Bottom (1974)

I've known Robert since he was the drummer and singer in Soft Machine, who were contemporaries of Pink Floyd, and I thought he was fantastic. He was a jazz enthusiast with a lot of technique. Robert's got such a distinctive voice and vocal ideas, but he was still interested in the rhythm parts. On *Rock Bottom* there's at least one rhythm track that's just Robert playing on a tin tray. And of course when you get Robert you get anyone else he happens to bring in, who tend to be pretty good players. I think this was my first production. My role was to supervise the recording and bring a bit more discipline as compared to what might have been a Soft Machine approach. We did a single too, Robert's version of "I'm A Believer," which I played drums on as well.

Gong: Shamal (1975)

That was great fun. They were very receptive to my take on things. You could give the drummer, Pierre Moerlen, an idea and ask him to do it, and he would do it. It was great to work with a drummer who could do stuff that I could never do. I also did an album by [Gong guitarist] Steve Hillage called *Green*, which was much more of a trio situation. I was probably more help to Gong than I was to Steve.

The Damned: Music For Pleasure (1977)

I think I enjoyed recording this album more than the band did, because they were in the process of splitting up. But it was great fun because they worked really quickly, and I was used to going to the studio and nine months later hopefully coming out with a record. Their idea was to go in on Monday and by Thursday you should have something more or less finished. It's great to work at that speed. But in a way I didn't bring much to that particular party, because there's a limit to what you can do when people are working that quickly, apart from saying, Take 2 is better than take 3.

Bob was very into the details of the drums, so we spent a lot longer on drum parts than we had on something like *Animals*. And James would suggest something if he thought it was worth trying.

In general *The Wall* had much tighter drum arrangements, the parts were much more mapped out. On most other recordings we'd use a particular take because everyone went, Oh yeah, that's a nice fill, or whatever. Whereas on *The Wall* there was much more a sense of, Let's work out what fill works best, learn it, and repeat it.

To some extent the music did become a bit secondary to the show, because it was such a job getting the wall built right, getting all the puppets rigged, and getting everything to work. The sense of relief when the thing was done was fantastic.

The Final Cut (1983)

After *The Wall*, the dynamic of the band had altered drastically, without [keyboardist] Rick Wright there. We no longer had someone to pick on and blame for everything. And I think Dave felt that he was rushed into *The Final Cut*. Both Rick and Dave had knocked out solo albums the year before, so it's unlikely they had any material lying around. So I think it just became more of a Roger album. My memory is that it was going to be a bunch of stuff that had been written for *The Wall* but that there wasn't room for on that album. So it was sort of a vague point that it set off from. I certainly was happy working on parts of it, but it just felt like Roger's solo album.

A Momentary Lapse Of Reason (1987)

There was a lack of confidence, stemming from not having played a lot in a few years, coupled with the fact that we knew that we were going to be very critically reviewed since Roger wasn't there. In hindsight, I should have just buckled down and got on with it. At the end of the day I ended up playing most of the tracks anyway, because we played them live. [Drummers Carmine Appice and Jim Keltner were brought in for a number of cuts on the recording.] Speed was perhaps an issue, plus some stuff was being done in LA while I was in the UK working on some other things.

It was a mutual agreement that we'd have other musicians play on the record. We'd done that before, though not very often. [Producer] Norman Smith played drums on "Remember A Day," for instance. That had a very light jazzy brush feel. Norman had arranged the song and knew exactly what he wanted, and tried to explain it to me. It was taking me forever, though. It absolutely wasn't a style that I could slip into. In a situation like that I really don't mind letting someone else play.

The Division Bell (1994)

Interestingly, we used computers slightly less by the time we were doing *The Division Bell*. Some players are brilliant at playing to a click track, but I think the performance inevitably loses a bit. If you are meant to be driving the thing, it's quite difficult to then be nailed to a metronome. Human performances are full of little time errors, but they do give it a quality. And that's with any drummer. And beyond that, hopefully everyone has their own style or signature. Then I'd play certain tracks and we'd have the computer sort it out, putting it into a perfect tempo. And *then* we'd put sort of a swerve on it so that it goes back to being slightly human, which is odd. But what's great about working with computers is that you can do a rough cut and see what works and what doesn't.

The Solo Projects

Fictitious Sports (1981)

This was under my name but it was really a Carla Bley album. I enjoyed working with that group of people. The complexity of the music was extraordinary compared to what I was used to. It's a great challenge when someone says, Well, it's a bar of thirteen followed by a bar of twelve, a bar of eleven, and a bar of ten, then it's in eight until the end...because once you are lost you're *really* lost. It's good for the soul, though. I was humbled and humiliated.

Mason + Fenn: Profiles (1985)

Rick Fenn and I had done a bunch of stuff together. That album started as soundtrack music to a film called *Life Could Be A Dream*. The film was funded by Rothman's, the cigarette people, who also sponsored the Porsche racing team. They wanted film of the Porsche team, so basically I got inducted into the team and they got the film and music. Rick and I wanted to do something with the music rather than just consign it to never being heard. So we used it as the basis to build an album from. We also did a soundtrack for a film called *White Of The Eye* with Cathy Moriarty.

To hear Nick Mason with Pink Floyd, for more of our interview with Nick, *and* for a chat with drummer Carmine Appice about his recording experience with Pink Floyd, go to www.moderndrummer.com.

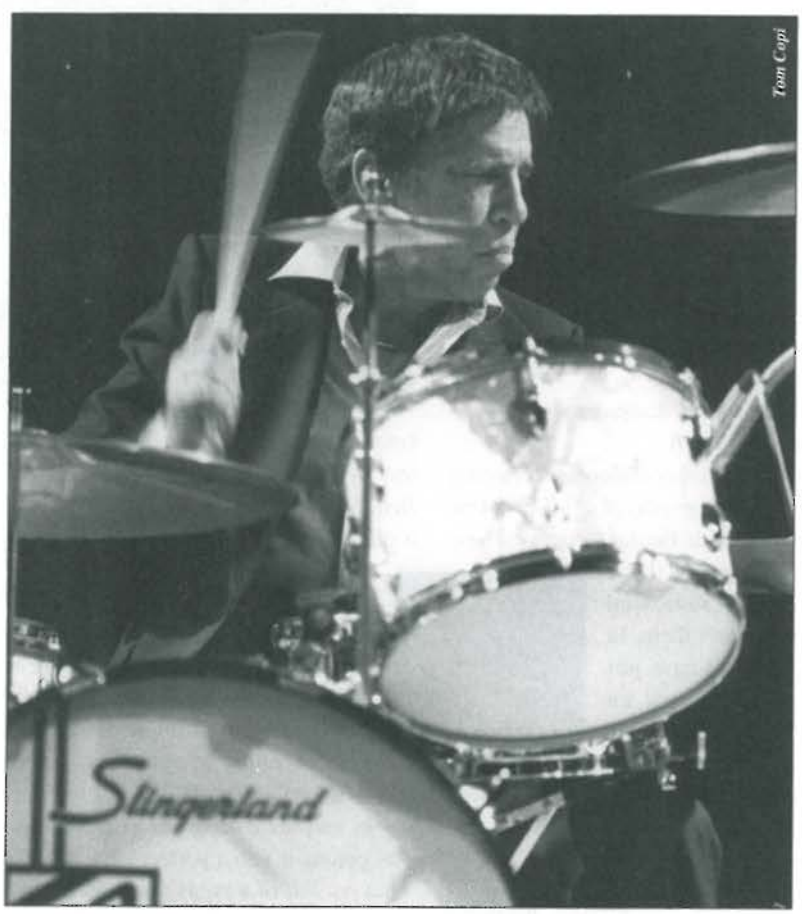
MD Radio

My Buddy

A Bass Player's Perspective

by Jon Albrink

In the spring of 1979 I was called to audition for the bass chair in The Buddy Rich Big Band. I'd heard all the stories of Buddy's nasty temper and tendency to be abusive to his musicians—especially bass players. But I needed the work, so I agreed to attend the rehearsal, which would be my audition. What the heck, I thought. Do the audition, get some experience, then choose.



"Welcome to the band," Buddy said. "Just play my time and we'll be fine."

The rehearsal was at Carrol's Studios on West 41st Street. When I got there I was introduced to Buddy, who was chewing gum like a teenager. He gave me an indifferent nod.

We played through a few tunes, and everything seemed cool until he stopped the band in the middle of a swing tune.

"Bass player!" he snapped. "I don't care about notes. I care about time. Play *my* time."

He called a new tune by Bob Mintzer. When we reached a difficult passage way up on the neck of the bass guitar, I scuffled a little and then dropped out. Buddy stopped the band.

"Bass player!" he called out to me. "Why did you stop playing?"

"Ah, well...I'm gonna have to take a closer look at this part. I'll get it together when I go home," I said.

"No, get it together now," he said. "We'll wait."

The air went out of the room. I focused on the page and played, all alone. The sound of the bass reverberated off the walls as I stumbled through the passage. I had to stop and stare at it; a few bars were escaping me. All the musicians, arrangers, and visitors watched silently. I felt a profound empathy rise up in the room as I struggled with the part and eventually played it to Buddy's satisfaction.

"Okay, from the top," he said, almost in a whisper. Afterwards, he told me, simply, "Play it right on Tuesday." Evidently I had the gig.

Trial By Fire

Over the next few days I considered copping out to spare myself some heat. But professional pride kicked in, and on Tuesday I boarded the bus with the rest of the band, headed for the first concert of a month-long tour. Buddy sat in front. I was the rookie, so I got the seat closest to him. One by one, old timers were summoned to hang with Buddy. The tour manager presented me with a band "uniform"—a maroon sweater.

At the gig, I was nervous as I paced backstage. All the other guys were relaxed and joking around. Buddy warmed up with paradiddles on a

practice pad. At a few minutes after 8:00 we took the stage in the high school auditorium. The bass amp was right next to Buddy's drums. He walked out and sat down, to tumultuous applause. Then he called off the first tune and counted the band in. I played the first bass note on the downbeat.

"It's too loud," he screamed at me.

Whoa. I made a show of turning down, and kept playing. Within a few minutes Buddy was dripping with sweat. There was fury in his playing, and incredible forward motion. I thought of people who get picked up and carried away by a tornado. I was terrified. As the show progressed, Buddy joked with the audience and loosened up. We played "Birdland," "West Side Story," and other hits. The Mintzer chart flew by, and I bit into the part and held on.

After the gig, we piled onto the bus. I got cautious congratulations from the guys. Then somebody came back to my seat saying, "Buddy wants to see you."

I sat down in the seat facing him. He flashed his famous toothy grin. "Welcome to the band," he said. "Just play my time and we'll be fine."

The Beat Goes On

We worked our way into the Midwest. I felt more and more secure in the "hot seat" as I got to know the book. But then one night Buddy called "You Gotta Try," an uptempo Basie chart that I hadn't yet encountered. The actual piece of music on my stand looked like a letter from some ancient war: frayed, stained, and faded.

We raced through the song. When I flipped the chart over mid-tune, the bottom half of page 2 was gone. A coffee stain, half a footprint, then black.

The will to live kicked in. I didn't play notes, I played time—*his* time. I thumped more or less happily, stopped when everyone else stopped, and no one seemed to be the wiser.

Standing right next to Buddy every night was indeed a hot spot. There was an undeniable life force in his playing, a propulsive energy and a *burning* swing. Most nights I couldn't believe what I was hearing, as this man in his mid-sixties lifted the band and the audience to the heights of an explosive ecstasy.

For a while Buddy seemed happy with me, happy with the band, and relaxed with the tour. One night he called "Joy Spring," an arrangement of the Clifford Brown tune that we hadn't rehearsed and I hadn't yet looked over. I saw a lot of notes, but there was not time to prepare. He counted, and we were off. Somehow I was flooded with the certainty that I could play this thing perfectly, so I did. The fear and adrenaline and all those years of practicing reached a critical mass, and the notes on the page seemed to jump out of my hands. Buddy must have noticed, because he turned to me and grinned, and said, "Yeah, Jon!"—only it was all slurred and sweaty because we were in the middle of the tune, and it was hot up there.

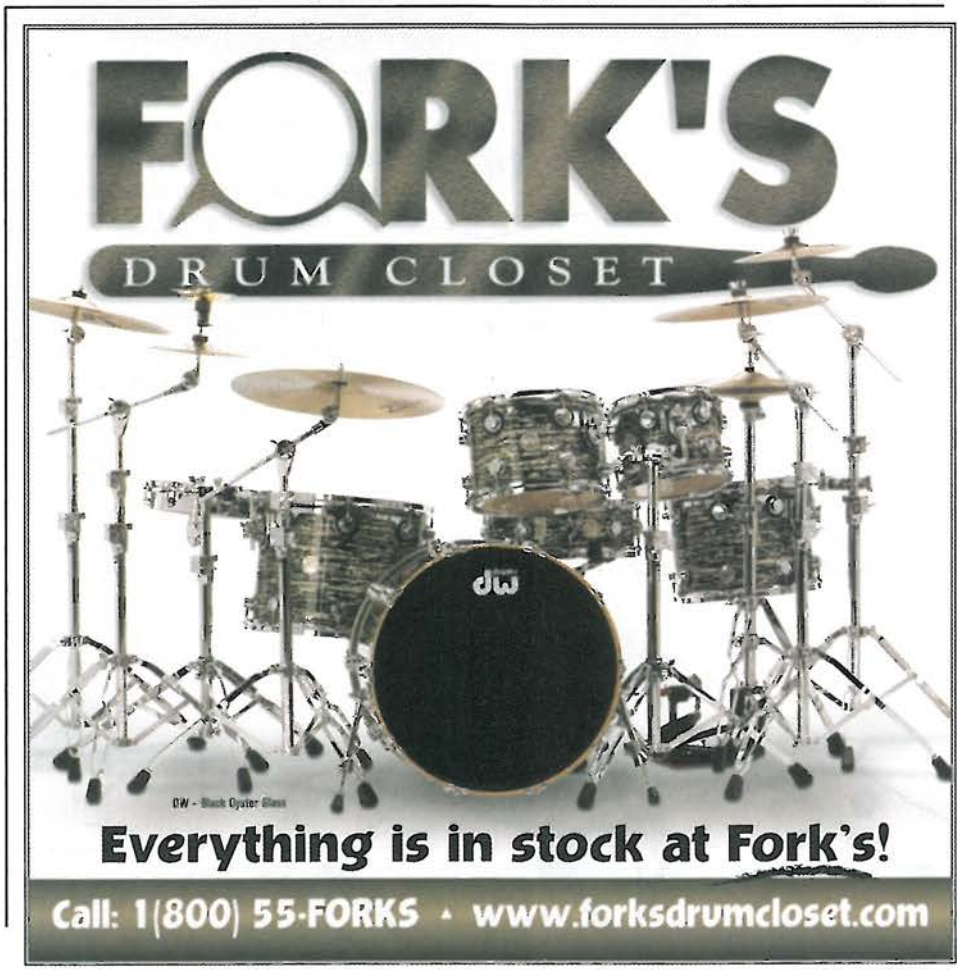
One of Buddy's favorite ballads had a very quiet and intense passage where the bass was in unison with the bass drum. I had been unable to feel the pulse where he played it, and had gotten into the habit of sneaking a look at his foot. Evidently he was on to me, because this night he caught me looking. "Don't look at my foot!" he hissed. "Feel it."

The Beginning Of The End

A gig in Youngstown proved to be a real turning point. There were some missed cues and "clams," and at the intermission Buddy was furious. He berated certain players by name, and complained that they were not earning their salaries. One phrase stayed with me: "Two hours a night is light work." Buddy gave his all every night, and he couldn't understand when his musicians gave less than their all.

Buddy's "pep talk" didn't work. The second set was a mess. We all filed onto the bus and waited for the inevitable. And the inevitable sounded roughly like this:

I'm out there every night killing myself, and you guys are loafing! All I ask of you is



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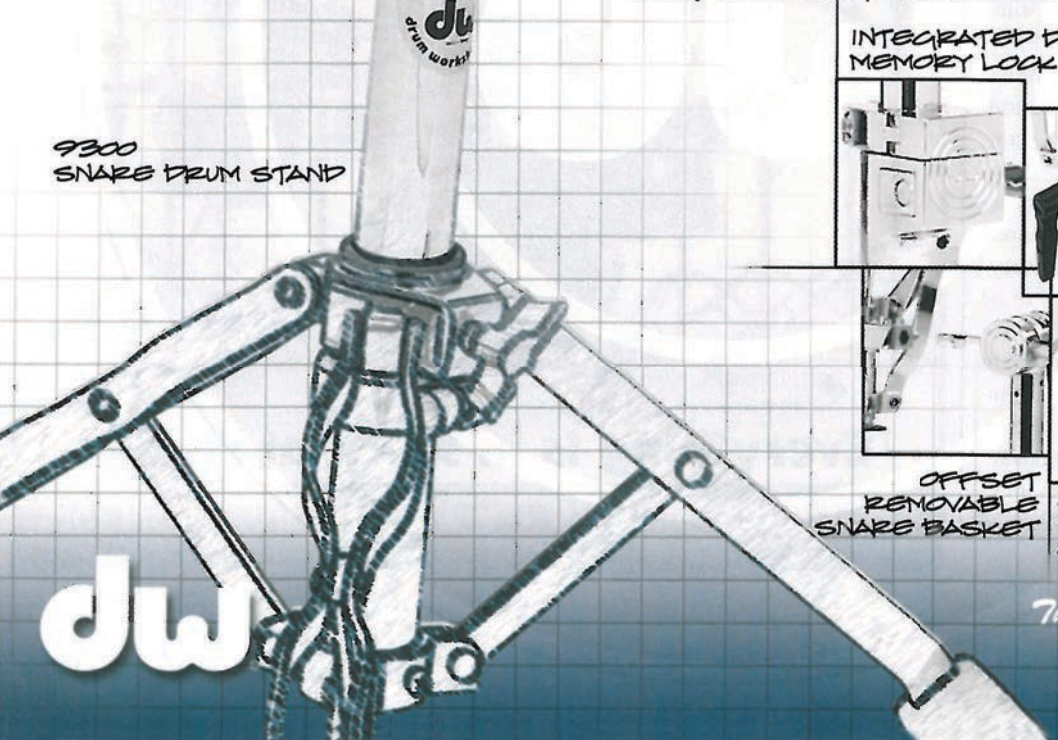

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My Buddy

that you do your job for two hours a night. I'm trying to keep you guys working, and this is what I get!

Then Buddy called a few of the old timers up—guys who had been in the band for five years or more. "M_," he said to one of them, "you're not my friend. F_, you're not my friend. P_, you are *definitely* not my friend. From now on I don't talk to you, I don't look at you, we don't hang out on the bus. You just shut up and do your job." Then he turned away. Willy, the old driver, started the bus, and we were off in silence.

Over the next few days, the guys talked when Buddy was out of earshot. "He's not eating all day," one said. "He wants to stay thin, so he won't eat until after a concert. Then Willy will bring him a hot dog or something. It messes with his blood sugar and he goes nuts. Don't take it personally." I didn't. So far it had been equal-opportunity venom.

Someone else had a darker, political interpretation. "Buddy has this thing against country & western music," he said. "In the '50s, when country & western was starting to be popular, Buddy said in an interview somewhere that it was a plot by radio programmers to keep people—especially white people—from listening to jazz. He said it was a racist plot to replace jazz with white-bread cornball music. He actually got some death threats for that."

"Wow," I said. "So?"

"So, since then, he's always irritable when we tour in the South. And I don't know if you've looked lately, but we're in the South." We were indeed in the South, headed toward the Southwest. Birmingham, Memphis, Oklahoma City, Dallas...Houston.

One day Buddy badly sprained his ankle in a softball game. He was far too tough to give up, so the tour proceeded as scheduled. Buddy found a way to compensate for his injury, as he played in pain. He started snapping more, and much of his ire was directed at me. "It sounds like a guitar up there," he said cryptically one night. And then, "I want to see you sweat!" I was sweating every night, but never mind. The honeymoon, such as it was, was over.

The next-to-last stop on this leg of the tour was a high school auditorium in Houston. I had decided that, no matter what, I was going to stay positive and try to get what I could out of this increasingly unpleasant trip.

It was clear during the first set that Buddy was unhappy. Sweating and muttering, his face in a knot, he started to lay it on me. "Nooooo!" he moaned. "Dammit!" *Bing bang crash.* The more I tried to fit in with him, the more I tried to enjoy myself, the madder he got. The set ended and we left the stage.

"Meet me on the bus. NOW!" Buddy said as he brushed by me. One of the guys rolled his eyes, but no one said anything.

The bus was empty except for Buddy and Willy. Buddy started on me. "What are you doing to my band?" he said. "I can't believe you can't hear what I'm trying to do out there. Do you have ears?" He unleashed a festival of profanity that I'm not going to try to reconstruct. Finally, he threatened to fire me if I didn't "get it together," after which he got up and stormed off the bus.

Buddy had trained his full fury on me for about five minutes. Willy, who had been sitting in the driver's seat and had heard it all, said, "Son, I gotta hand it to you. You took it like a man."

That's All Folks

Buddy was giving me another chance, but for me the party was over. I finished the show in Houston, then flew to Detroit with the band for the last concert of this leg of the tour. I told the tour manager that I would be leaving the band. I wasn't interested in going to Europe with Buddy.

I had lasted one month. Buddy Rich was truly a force of nature, and I'll never forget how it felt to be swept up in his energy. He loved to play, and he put himself at some financial risk to keep his band working. He seemed incapable of holding anything back on the bandstand, and he was truly flabbergasted (to say the least) when he thought his musicians were coasting.

The time he looked up at me and said, "Yeah, Jon!" was thrilling. Getting cussed out on the bus, well...that was thrilling, too, in another way. And I still chuckle at the memory of the day I gave my notice. That morning we took the bus to the airport. The tour manager came back and said, "I told Buddy you're leaving. We're gonna need that sweater back."

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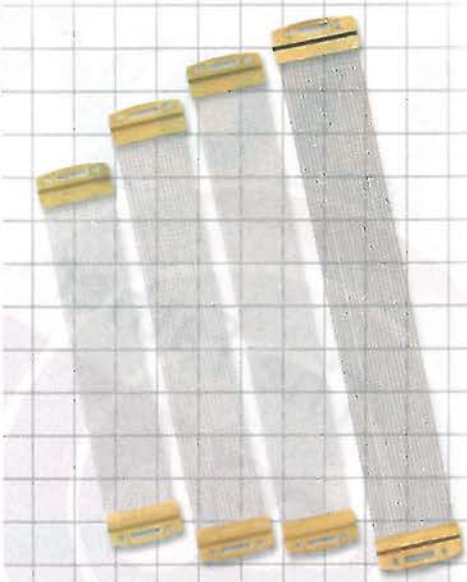

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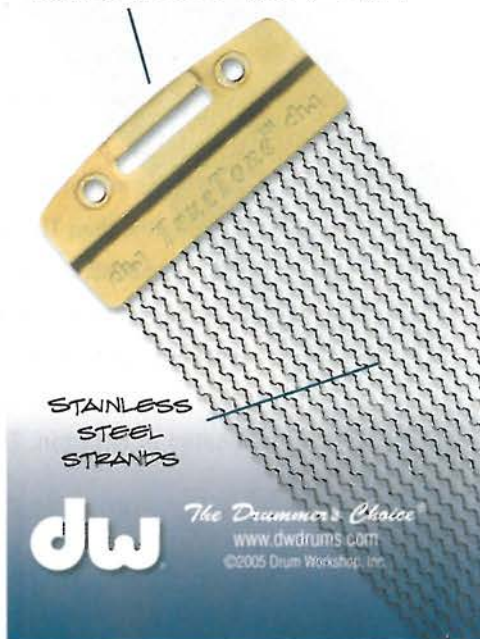

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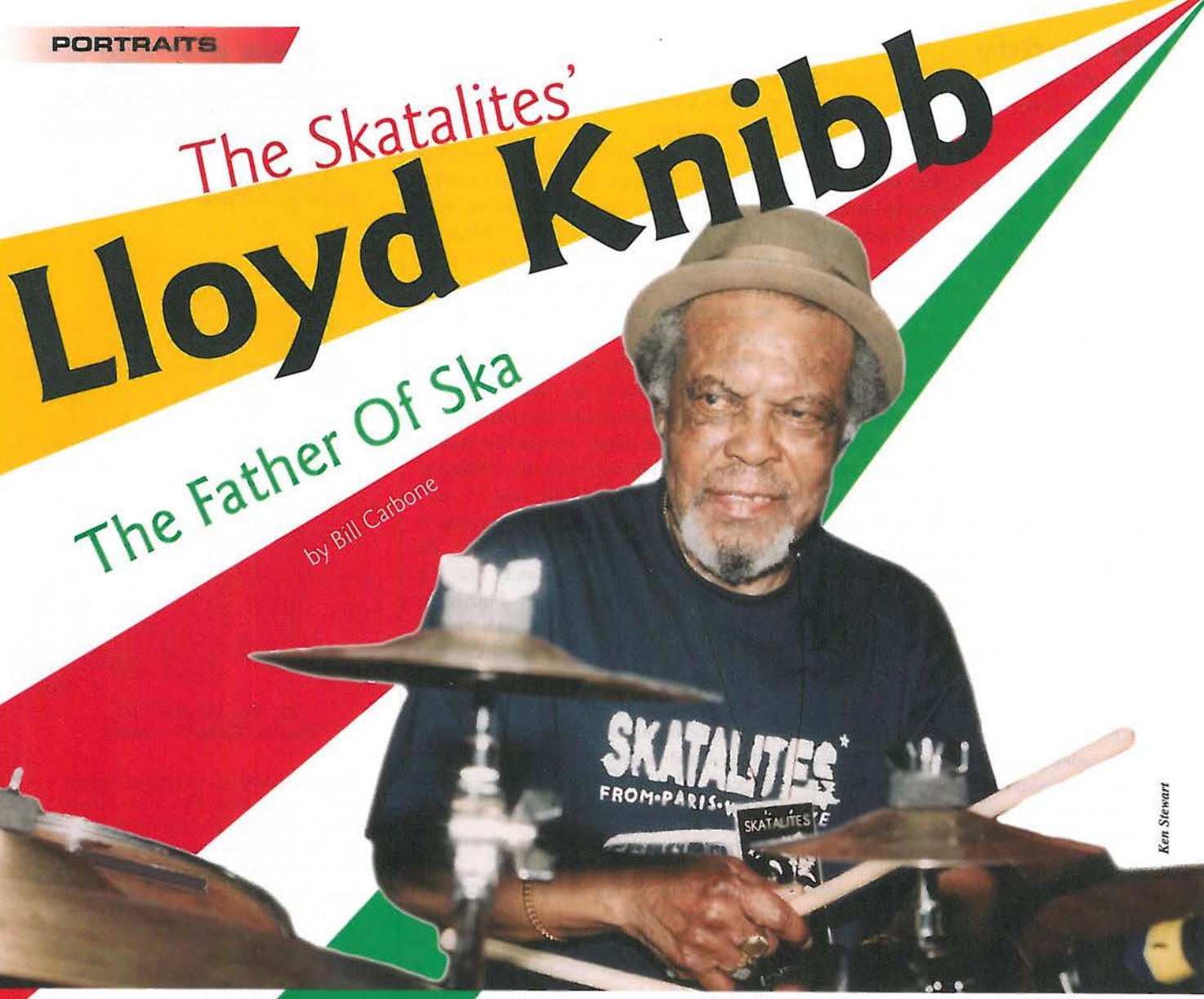
The Skatalites' Lloyd Knibb

The Father Of Ska

by Bill Carbone



Ken Stewart

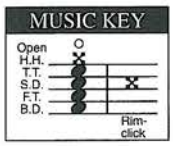
Reggae music has become synonymous with the Rastafarian culture movement that defined it during the 1970s. But it actually began a decade earlier in the recording studios of Kingston, Jamaica. Prior to the early 1960s, most recorded Jamaican popular music was in the style of American R&B. But in 1962, it evolved into a new and distinctly Jamaican style known as ska.

Of all the groups in this formative era of reggae, none was more influential than The Skatalites. Their drummer, Lloyd Knibb, is credited with creating the ska drum beat that is still prominent in reggae today.

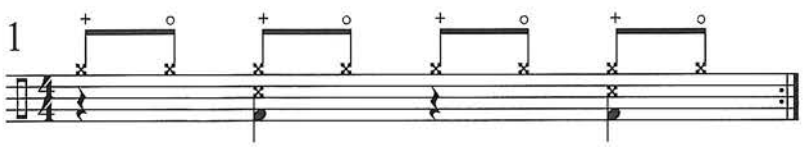
After working for fifteen years in jazz and dance bands in the tourist center of Montego Bay, in 1962 Knibb relocated to Kingston. There he began recording for Coxsone "Downbeat" Dodd at the now legendary Studio One. From 1962 to 1965, Knibb and The Skatalites were the house band at Studio One. In addition to their own instrumental recordings, they backed virtually every vocalist to record during that period, including Toots Hibberts, Jimmy Cliff, Delroy Wilson, Alton Ellis, John Holt, Price Buster, and Bob Marley.

But in 1965, the band's amazing run ended as quickly as it had begun. Knibb returned to Montego Bay, where he performed in hotels and on cruise ships—until the reassembled Skatalites lured him to the US in the early 1980s. Now in his seventies, Knibb is still recording and touring internationally with The Skatalites, Ernest Ranglin, and others. *MD* spoke with Lloyd at his home in Hull, Massachusetts.

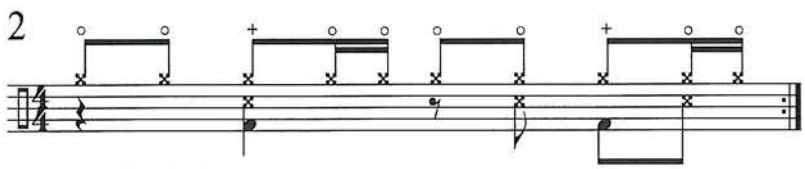
A Reggae Primer



Lloyd Knibb's work on Bob Marley's first hit, "Simmer Down" (1963), is an excellent example of what would become known as the one-drop rhythm. By shifting the bass drum to beats 2 and 4, Knibb creates the lilt that is still a characteristic of reggae today.



Check out Lloyd's synthesis of a Latin feel into this beat on Don Drummond's track "Chinatown" (1964).



The intro and first four bars of Bob Marley's classic "One Love" (1965) demonstrate Lloyd's chops and driving groove. They are also a great example of his Latin and jazz influences.

MD: Before you landed in Coxsone Dodd's studio in Kingston, what music were you inspired by?

Lloyd: I was listening to music by Cab Calloway, Teddy Heath, Count Basie, Glenn Miller, and all those bands. We used to play that music in the hotels, along with a lot of cha cha and bolero. So I had that in my brain, and I put it in the ska beat.

MD: Did you set out to change the role of the drums, or did it happen naturally?

Lloyd: It was a natural thing. I was in the studio, playing the same old boom-cha boom-cha thing [sings an R&B shuffle rhythm], when Coxsone Dodd said to me, "I want to change the beat." I remembered

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Lloyd Knibb

playing a lot of Latin and different kinds of tunes, so I came up with the second and fourth beat, and that was it.

MD: When you recorded in Coxsone's studio, were you backing up the singers live?

Lloyd: *Everything* was live. We didn't do no dubs. The board they had was just four to ten tracks. Sometimes there was just one mic'. Everybody was around that mic', and the vocalist would go into it, too.

MD: One notable song from that era is "Chinatown," by Don Drummond. The beat is very fresh. You're accenting the 2 and 4 with the bass drum and the "&" of 3 and the "&" of 4 with the sidestick.

Lloyd: Yes, and I have another beat that I brought in, too: the one-drop. [Lloyd sings a melody and plays a one-drop on his leg.] I did a lot of tunes with that kind of beat.

MD: Carlton Barrett, who was Bob Marley's drummer from the late 1960s until Marley's death in 1981, is credited as the inventor of the one-drop style.

Lloyd: No, man! [laughs] Carly Barrett and Sly [Dunbar, highly influential reggae drummer since the 1970s] used to sit on our bandstand when they were boys. All of them know it from me. Carly used to set up my drums all the time.

[Lloyd pulls out a Bob Marley album.] This was Bob Marley's first session. Bob, Peter Tosh, and Bunny Wailer...the three of them used to sing together.

MD: You're drumming on it?

Lloyd: Yeah, man!

MD: There's the original version of "One Love," with the big drum fills in the intro, and "Simmer Down."

Lloyd: Yes, all the originals. When Bob Marley came in the studio, he didn't know how to count. So I said, "All right, I will cue you, and that's all you get," so he'd know. After that, Toots and everybody—you name them, all the vocalists that you hear about now—passed through my hands. We did twenty tunes a day sometimes.

MD: In your photo on a poster of the 1964 Skatalites in concert, the snare is tilted sharply away from you, and you're playing traditional grip. When you did the original recordings, was your snare set that way? I ask because your snare shots are so resonant.

Lloyd: Yeah, Carly used to set up my drums like that.

MD: On the early stuff, you often played a ride cymbal or open hi-hat. It doesn't seem too far removed from jazz.

Lloyd: It depends on what's happening in front. I might play ding-dicky-dicky ding [Lloyd gestures playing a hi-hat], but if the soloist is not doing much then I don't do it.

MD: Also on early recordings, the bass line is still walking, like in jazz. Your cymbal work seems related to that.

Lloyd: It's an open cymbal, like jazz. But in a ska beat you've got to hold it down. In jazz—ding ding da ding—there's not a lot of work, right? But ska, now, has the most work. [He sings "Oh Shirley" while playing a beat on the table.] You see, I change the whole thing with that second and fourth beat: *boom* wacka!

MD: I know that your roots are in big band, where a bass drum is often "feathered." Did you feather the bass drum with the ska beat?

Lloyd: Not in ska music. Ska is more work than jazz; the drummer feels it more.

MD: When you say "more work," do you mean the tempos?

Lloyd: It's the tempos, and you've got to drive and center the music.

MD: Let's go back to the beginning. How did you learn to play drums?

Lloyd: I used to live at West Street, and there was a big band that practiced there.

"Ska is more work than jazz; the drummer feels it more. It's the tempos, and you've got to drive and center the music."

Donald Jarrett played drums, and I used to go and watch him. After their rehearsal finished, I'd go home and take up a pan and a box. I'd bang my heel on the box for the bass drum, and the pan was the snare drum.

Eventually I got some real drums, and I started to do some real practicing. A friend heard me and said, "Val Bennett needs a drummer, and I think only you can fill the space." So I went into Val's band. We played a lot of Cab Calloway, Tiny Davis, and Louis Jordan stuff. When that band broke up, I joined Dean Frasier.

MD: Did you have access to good-quality drums and cymbals in Jamaica then?

Lloyd: My first drumset was made for me by a guy named Proba, out of plywood and iron staples. He also made all the pedals, the cymbal stand, and the snare drum stand. We never got plastic drumheads, just pelican or goat skin.

MD: Pelican, like the bird? It was thick enough that it didn't break?

Lloyd: Right, it's thick. But at night when we went to the country to play, it got cool. I had to keep a light bulb in the bass drum and the other drums to keep the heat so the heads didn't sound floppy. I used to buy my goatskin and scrape the skin myself, because I couldn't get ready-made heads at the store in those days. Up to 1950, we had just one music store. If you wanted anything you'd have to tell them and they'd order it from America.

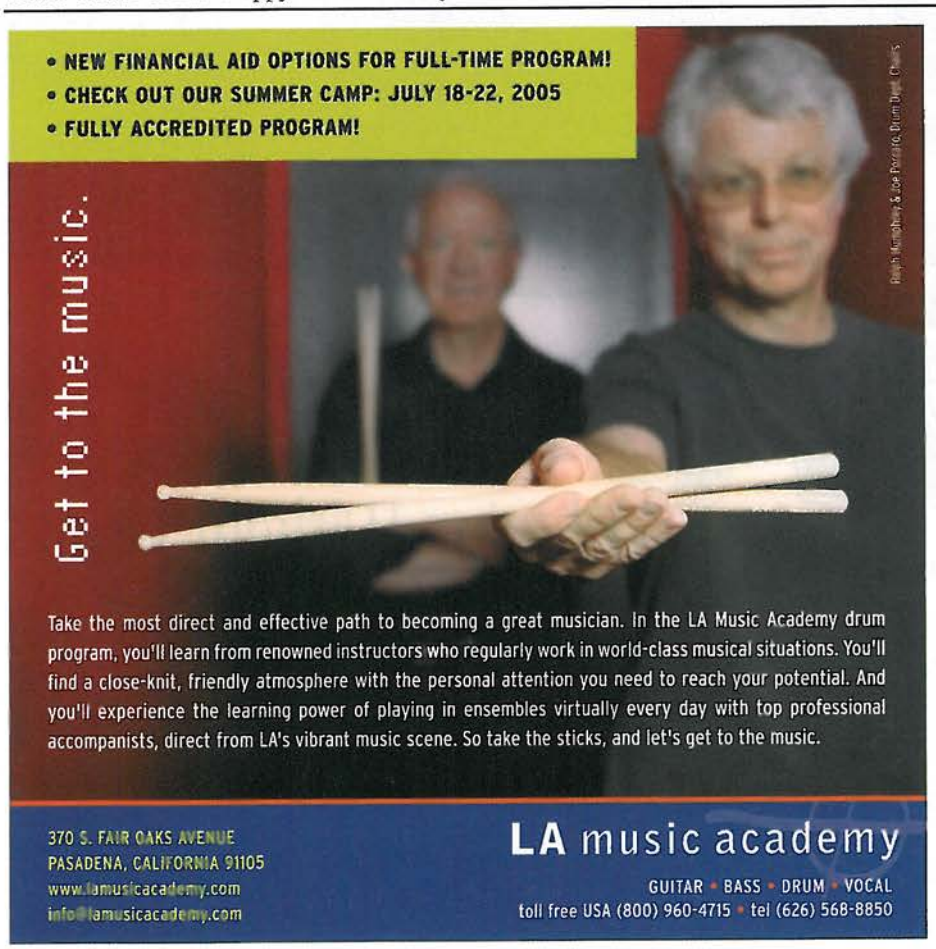
MD: How about cymbals, were they made locally?

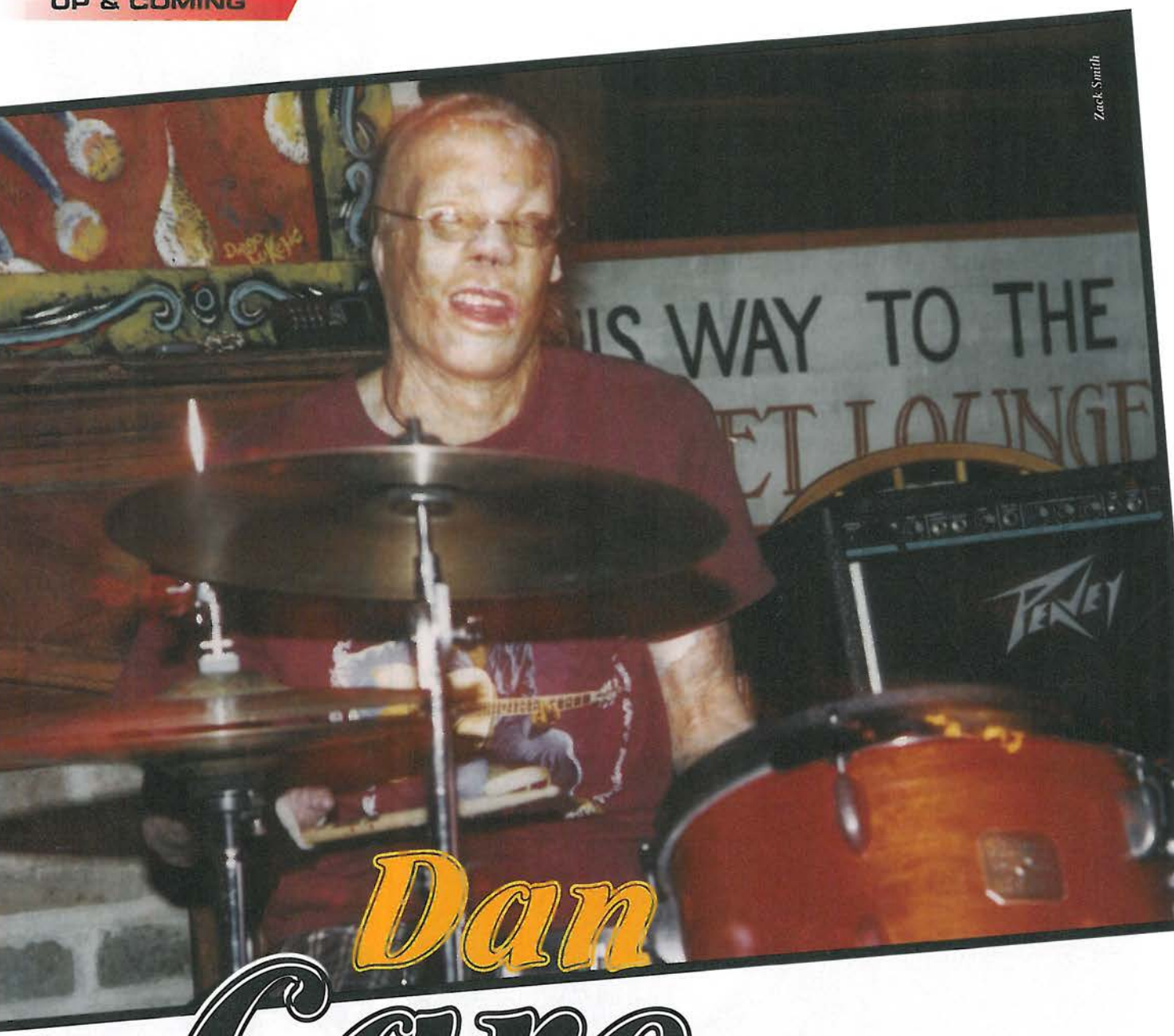
Lloyd: No man, no local cymbals. You'd have to find some cymbal from somewhere. [laughs] My cymbal had a little break in it.

MD: In terms of playing drumset, did you ever go back and study?

Lloyd: Well, Lester Sterling taught me to read music, but I think you're better off just playing your feelings. If you know the tune, just play. When I just read those drum parts, it's too straight. There's more to playing music than that. If you just follow the part, it'll make you lazy. Luckily, in ska music you don't have to use your brain so much, because it's right in your heart. [Laughs]

Lloyd Knibb can be reached through www.skatalites.com.





Zack Smith

Dan Caro

Playing Without Limits

by Michael Dawson

For some of us, drumming is an outlet from daily life. For others, it's a full-time job. But for Dan Caro, drumming is much more than a source of recreation and income: It's a means for strength, inspiration, and independence. As he states and *truly* believes, "I owe a lot to drumming."

Back in 1982, Dan's life was changed forever when he wandered into the garage of his Louisiana home. In a flash, a build-up of gasoline fumes ignited, scorching nearly every inch of his two-year-old body. As a result, Dan lost almost 70% of his skin, as well as the fingers on both hands. More than ten years of reconstructive surgeries and physical therapy were required to repair the damage.

Despite the years of pain and struggle to rebuild himself physically, Dan's inner spark remained unscathed. He quickly learned that while even the simplest tasks were challenging, they weren't impossible. Fueled with determination, Dan set out to participate in a variety of activities, including drumming.

Coming from a musical family, Dan had a natural inclination to pick up the sticks. "My father and my oldest brother played trumpet, and my next oldest brother played trombone. So I guess I wanted to follow the family trade," he explains. "But more importantly, I wanted to prove to myself and to everyone else that I could do whatever was necessary."

Because he lost his fingers in the accident, the young drummer initially had to figure out a way to hold the drumsticks. "I have a reconstructed thumb on my left hand," says Dan. "So I can grip with that. But I don't have anything to grip with on the right side. For the right hand, I use a wristband with a rubber band around it, which simulates the fulcrum between the thumb and index finger of matched grip." When asked about the effectiveness of this method, Dan confirms, "It works really well. It has some limitations, but so does the human hand."

Surprisingly, Dan encountered less trouble with his right hand than one might expect. "By the time I developed genuine interest beyond the 'I have to prove something' attitude," he says, "I was already using the wristband and rubber bands. So the right hand took care of itself. My left hand was the one that gave me a lot of problems. Even though I could grip with it, I didn't have any strength. I never did anything as in-depth as holding a drumstick, which requires a lot of focused muscular action. So it was a struggle to develop control."

Until he started drumming, Dan relied on

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both hands to do most day-to-day activities. But, as he explains, "by playing the drums for hours every day, I developed strength in my left hand that's allowed me to do much more in my daily life. Drumming has allowed me to be much more independent."

In fact, drumming took on an important therapeutic role during Dan's years of rehabilitation. "Drumming is the most in-depth physical therapy I've ever had, and I've had a lot," he confirms. "I've had 122 reconstructive surgeries. But no physical therapy I've gone through at the hospital or rehab service did anything near what I can do because I play the drums."

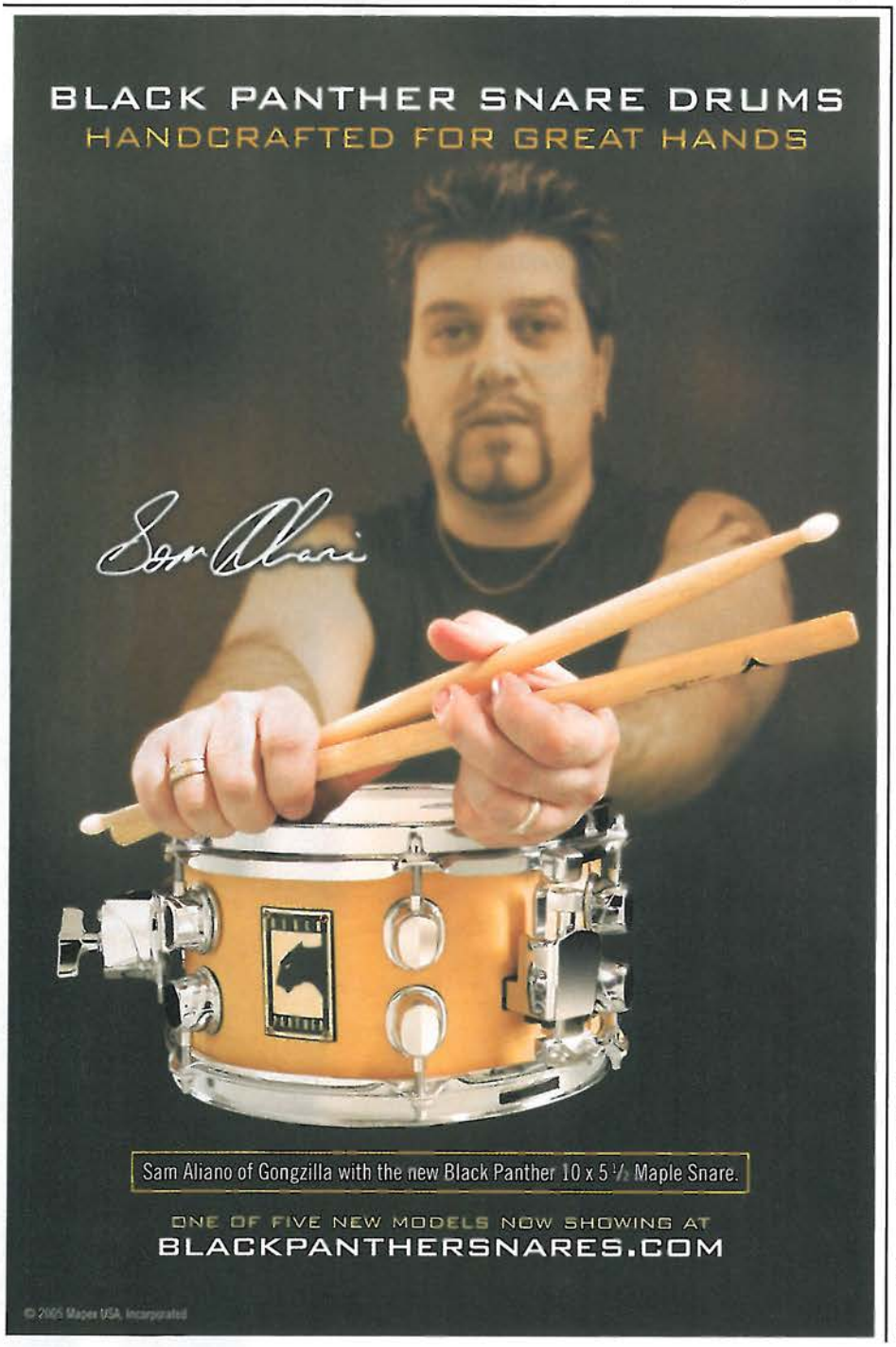
Much of this self-rehabilitation was a result of Dan's unrelenting desire to improve. Says Dan, "I practiced until I had no skin on my hands, period. It was truly a blood, sweat, and tears type of thing. I just wanted to do it so much. I'd practice about four hours, and I'd hold drumsticks throughout the day to develop the strength, dexterity, and endurance to grip the stick. I never let a day go by."

"Dan is an inspiration to all who encounter him. Not only is he a great drummer, he is a testament to the human spirit."

Stanton Moore

Along the way, Dan has encountered a number of exceptional people who have helped shape and refine his approach to the drums. While attending Loyola University in 2000 and 2001, Dan was exposed to various advanced musical concepts by famed New Orleans drummer Johnny Vidacovich. As Dan explains, "I wasn't aware of the subtleties of drumming until I studied with Johnny. I was more into the technical side of things. Like any young student: More is better. But he taught me how to listen." Brian Blade is another New Orleans jazz great who's had a major impact on Dan's drumming. "Brian blew me away with his expressiveness and control," says Dan. "I listen to him at least once a day for inspiration."

But the influences don't stop there. Dan also cites jazz masters Elvin Jones and Tony Williams, and funky New Orleans drummers Zigaboo Modeliste, Russell



Batiste, and Stanton Moore as major influences. Dan is especially drawn to the adventurousness of Stanton's playing. "He's doing something phenomenal, using all kinds of electronics with the New Orleans stuff," proclaims Dan. "He's breaking boundaries."

As for his own approach to the instrument, Dan is always exploring new territories. "Every day I try to get involved through different musical experiences," he says. "If I had to limit myself to one thing, I'd be in agony. I'd probably end up quitting."

Currently, Dan is putting a lot of energy and effort into the original R&B/rock 'n' roll group Boogie City. With this project, the drummer uses samples and sequences to augment his live performances. Spurred by a recent interest in the pop music of the 1980s, Dan has become focused on the precision that this type of playing demands. He explains, "Pop music is so produced and perfected that you have to be rock-solid to perform it."

To keep himself balanced, Dan is also involved in more experimental projects. As he explains, "I want to push myself further into free-form playing. I'm extreme. I don't give one thing more effort than another."

Another one of Dan's regular gigs, Michael Ray & The Cosmic Krewe, allows the drummer to express his diverse interests. With this group, Dan has to pull off a wide range of styles, from funky odd-meter grooves, to straight-ahead jazz, to extended free improvisations.

Dan is equally adventurous in the practice room. He explains one of his more creative practice methods, stating, "I've been going through my collection of books and reading them upside down. This way, the bass drum part moves to the rack tom, or wherever." As for the purpose of such practice, he says, "It affects the way you hear patterns and how you build drum parts. Instead of being rooted on the bass drum, you put the root somewhere else. It makes you think differently."

In addition to his busy schedule as a drummer, Dan is also using his experiences to connect with people as a public speaker. After his accident, the Shriners organization took care of Dan, covering all of his medical expenses. Over the years, they've kept in touch with him for public service announcements and endorsements. Dan has spoken at a variety of Shriners functions, including their biggest annual fundraiser, the Shrine Bowl. From these experiences, Dan discovered the Toastmasters organization and has since become the president of his local club. Dan would like to continue to explore this new interest, stating, "I feel like I can share something with people that might motivate them to go above and beyond what they expect of themselves."

As for some passing advice, Dan says, "You are your only limit. If you get rid of it, then, 'Space is the place.' Anything and everything is possible. If you think it, you can do it—in every facet of life."

Marnie Martin

Portland, Oregon's Marnie Martin has been rocking the Pacific Northwest over the past decade in a variety of hard-hitting bands, ranging stylistically from thrash, to punk, to melodic hard rock. Combining a range of influences that include Dave Lombardo, Dave Grohl, and Lars Ulrich, Marnie saturates every gig in a wash of power and passion. As she states, "I play very aggressively and have been drumming hard my whole life." To her, music and drumming run much deeper than simple technique. She explains, "When I'm playing and inspiring people—connecting with other people in the world—that's what I do it for. Music brings people together. Music is life."

And since her earliest drumming days, music has *become* her life. "I started carrying a snare drum to school in 5th grade and just kept on going," she says. "And I've been playing ever since." Now, after years of self-teaching, including time spent shedding through Rod Morgenstein's *Double Bass Drumming*, Marnie's career is on the rise.

Marnie has recently toured the nation in support of bands such as Everclear, Bouncing Souls, and Hot Water Music, and her discography includes albums for the bands The Creeps, The Delinquents, All Out, Pinehurst Kids, and Longshot. She also recorded a radio and TV commercial for ESPN's X Games. As a result of these successes, Marnie has gained endorsements with Vic Firth drumsticks, Sabian cymbals, and the Dickies Girl clothing line. She also uses DW drums and hardware, a Pearl steel piccolo snare drum, a Tama Iron Cobra double pedal, SKB cases, and Ahead drum gloves and stick wrap.

Her most current project, the band Drive, is building strong local and national following with their unique blend of heavy riffs and melodic hooks, supported by Marnie's invigorating drumming. You can check them out at www.driveband.net.

Simon Miller

Although only 20, drummer/teacher/entrepreneur Simon Miller has amassed the résumé of a well-seasoned veteran. Simon launched into the music business at the age of nine, singing with the Trinity Boys' Choir for the Queen of England and President Clinton. Then, at eleven, he took up the drums, working with several prominent teachers including his current tutors, John Favicchia and Dom Famularo.

Since 2002, Simon has been the drummer and backup vocalist for The Greg Raposo Band. Touring throughout the US, the band has shared billing with many popular artists such as Nick and Aaron Carter, Jordan Knight, Jefferson Starship, and Simple Plan. In addition to the Greg Raposo Band, Simon is also performing and recording with several NYC–based artists, including Akiva, Rich Stein, and Mandy Ventrice.

When he's not on the road or in the studio, Simon is busy as an educator, teaching over thirty students a week and conducting clinics in various schools throughout the New York area. From his experience with private instruction, Simon is putting together an instructional book geared towards teaching the younger student. And, as if he wasn't busy enough, Simon assists fellow artists and musicians in the area of self-promotion, helping them create professional press kits, business plans, and Web sites.

Simon currently endorses GMS drums and uses Vic Firth drumsticks, Sabian and Zildjian cymbals, Yamaha electronics, Metrophones headphones, Fat Congas cajons, Remo djembes, Protection Racket cases, and DW hardware. For more info on Simon, visit www.simondrums.com.

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Evan Gallipoli

Evan Gallipoli's band, P.U.R.E., may fall under the label "Christian rock," but don't be misled. Though they share the same spiritual beliefs as other groups in the genre, P.U.R.E. is a rock band, plain and simple. Their roots lie deep in the modern sounds of today's hip-hop-infused groups like Red Hot Chili Peppers, Rage Against The Machine, POD, and Incubus.

For Evan, there have never been any clear-cut musical boundaries. At an early age, he was exposed to a wide variety of music from his father's record collection, which included Chick Corea, Weather Report, and Tower Of Power. These early influences laid the groundwork as Evan developed his own drumming style that also draws from contemporary players such as Chad Smith, Morgan Rose, and Carter Beauford. But, despite his wide-ranging tastes, the bottom line for Evan is the groove. "I feel that a groove is not only more interesting than flashiness, but it's much more artistic and fun to listen to," says the young drummer.

On their self-released disc, *18 Inch Progression*, Evan and his bandmates display a genre-jumping sound that's gained them strong billings in the New York tri-state area, including the annual Autumn Blaze at Continental Airlines Arena. To hear Evan and P.U.R.E., go to www.purenj.com.

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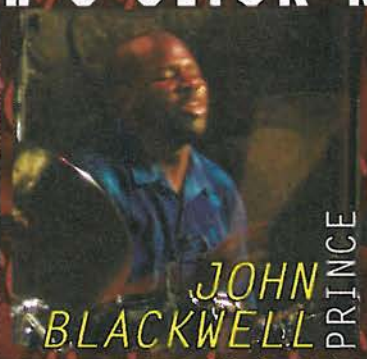

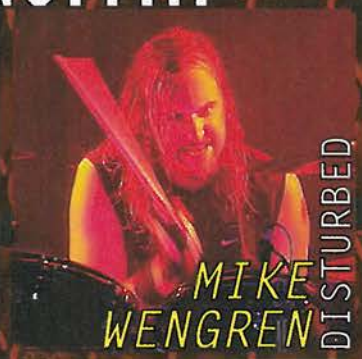

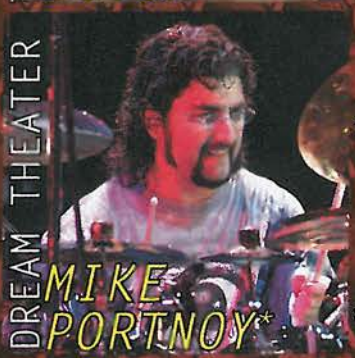

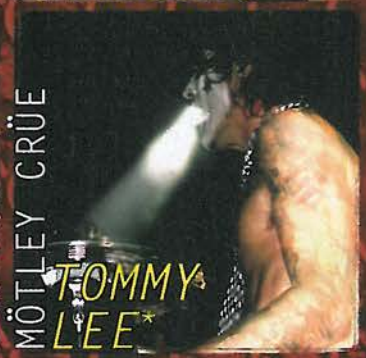

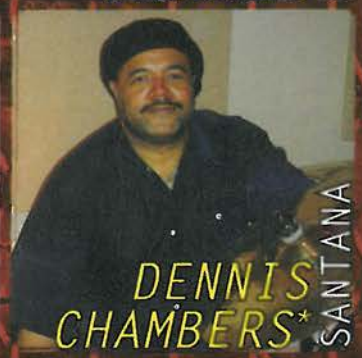

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STEVE VAI'S

Jeremy Colson

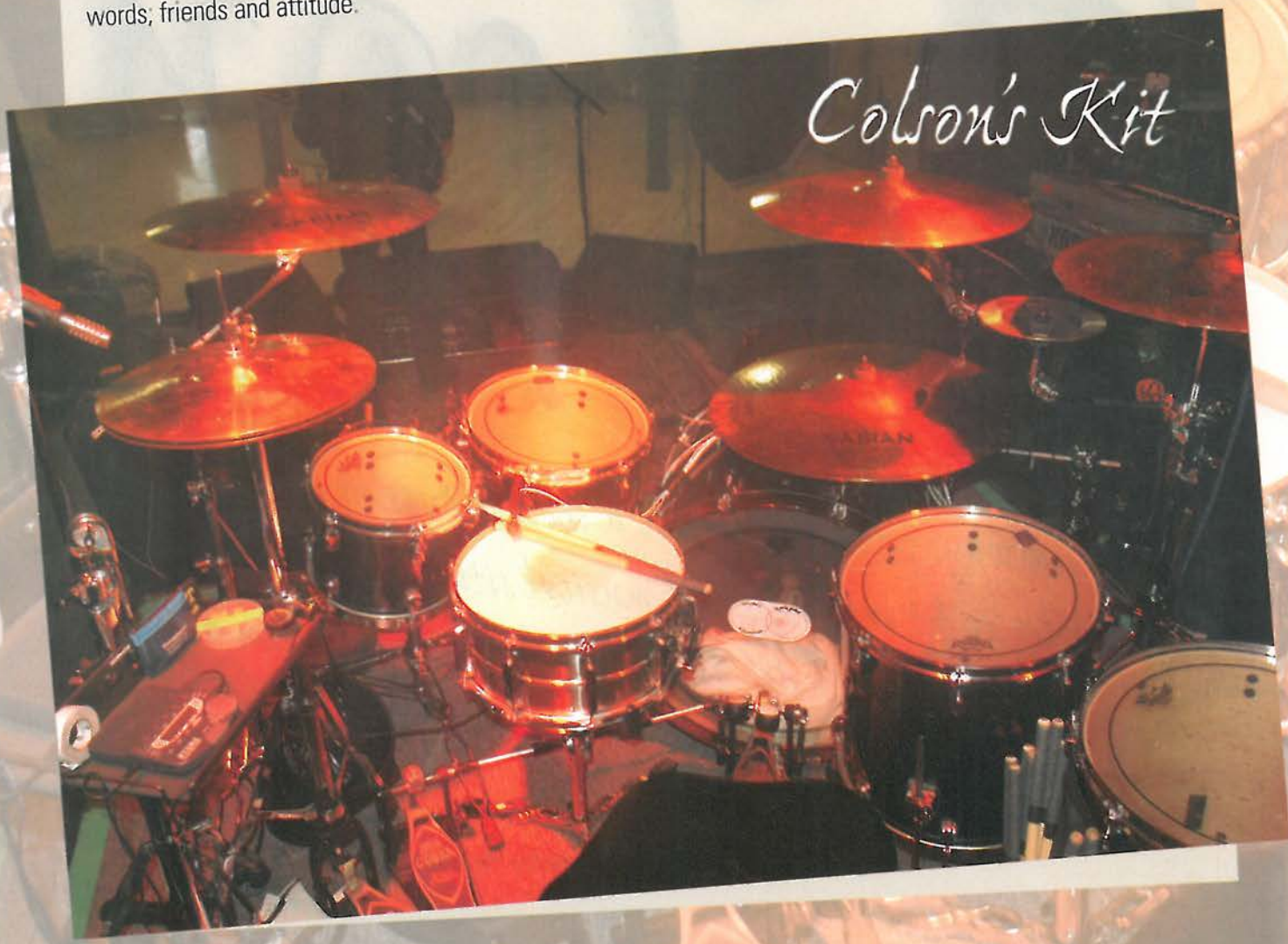
PROGRESSIVE PUNK

"I always felt I had to be a certain type of drummer in order to fit into different musical situations. But now I say, 'This is what I do,' and you either like it or you don't."

Story by Mike Haid • Photos by Rick Malkin

If you're even remotely familiar with progressive rock guitar god Steve Vai, you know that he's always surrounded himself with the most technically amazing drummers on the planet. You're certainly familiar with these guys: Terry Bozzio, Mike Mangini, and Virgil Donati. So when Vai went searching to fill the drum chair for his most recent recording and tour, his choice seemed like an odd one. How the heck did he end up calling a virtual unknown, a guy playing a four-piece kit in a punk band that was working at a dive bar on Tuesday nights in San Francisco? Well, if you ask that drummer, Jeremy Colson, he'll probably define it in two words; friends and attitude.

As most of us know, overnight success takes many years of blood, sweat, and tears. In Colson's case, it was plenty of that, in addition to tackling several demons along the way. It's a long journey from a young boy's dream of becoming a great progressive rock drummer to the reality of actually performing with one of the greatest progressive musicians in history. In fact, for a time Colson gave up the technically sophisticated progressive trail to venture down the more simplistic, aggressive path of metal and punk. And that, along with a great attitude, might just explain his success.



MD: Was prog rock what got you into drumming?

Jeremy: At age fifteen I decided to take drumming seriously. I went in search of the drummer that was considered the best, and at the time that was Neil Peart. So I got into Rush and the whole progressive thing. At that age, I really felt like an outsider and very alone, so I lived and breathed Rush music and practiced drums all the time. After listening to and studying Peart, I realized I didn't want to be just a drummer in the background keeping time. I also loved how technical and challenging that music was.

MD: Did you seek out any formal training to help prepare you to play such difficult music?

Jeremy: I took lessons from a guy named Alan Schechner, who is now a good friend of mine. He has a book coming out that's going to be published by Mel Bay. Alan helped me a lot with my technique. And he still helps me. He wrote out some of the more difficult Vai parts so I could read them and learn them note-for-note. It was very helpful having some of the more difficult things charted out so I could study them. That's where reading is very useful for me.

So I had taken a few lessons. But what enabled me to learn to play progressive music was just constantly practicing along to the music. I was obsessive about it. I would go to bed every night listening to a different Rush CD. All of that listening and practicing allowed me to

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- A. 6½x14 birch snare
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- D. 15x15 floor tom
- E. 16x16 floor tom
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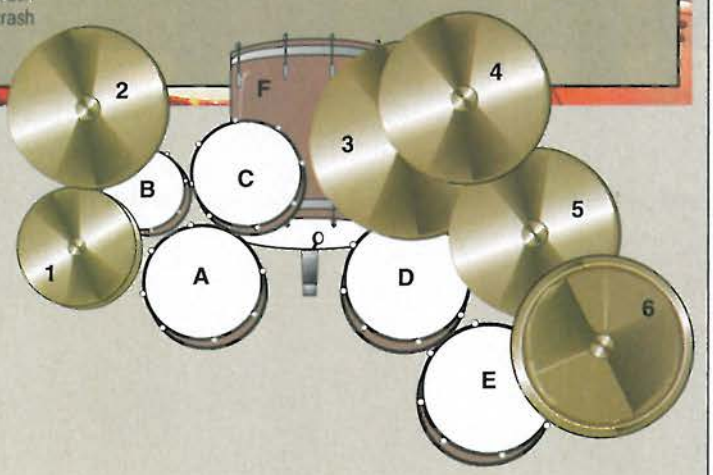
Sticks: Vater Morgan Rose model (held in left hand) and XD Rock model (in right), Vater stick tape, Gorilla Snot grip aid



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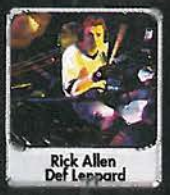
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Guitar Speak

Steve Vai's Thoughts On Colson

by Mike Haid

"Jeremy Colson is the first drummer I've ever worked with where I didn't have to concentrate on what he was doing," says guitar great Steve Vai. "It's just *there* and solid as a rock. He's very enthusiastic about learning difficult music, he does it very well, and he takes it very seriously. That, in itself, is a real bonus for me.

"First and foremost," Vai continues, "when I choose guys for the band, I choose their personalities over their musicianship, because when you go out on tour, there are no secrets. If you're dealing with a typically unhappy person, when they're out on tour they're *really* miserable. But when you're dealing with good guys on tour, they become really good guys. That's very important to me, because a tour takes up a good chunk of your life. When you look back on one, you don't remember how many records you sold or how many people came to see the show. What you really remember is the experience.

"Jeremy is a perfect bandmember in that regard. He's a great guy to tour with, and he listens and he's concerned. As for the recording studio, I've worked with many drummers, and at times I've had some of them in tears. It's not because I'm a jerk. It's because I want things played in a way that I hear them. Jeremy is so patient and so intent on getting it right that it makes it a pleasure.

"From the moment I met Jeremy, I could tell that he had the patience to do virtually anything within his physical capabilities. And there's not much he can't do. He has the patience to sit and decipher complexities. By the same token, there's this overall rock attitude that comes out of him that keeps things real and solid.

"When I listen to a drummer, just like any other person that puts their fingers on an instrument, their tone is a reflection of the way they hear themselves play. Their tone comes out of their personality. I hear that in every drummer. I can hear a personality in the way he or she hits their snare.

"For instance, when I worked with Abe Laboriel Jr., when he hit the kick drum, it sounded like an orchestra. Then you take a guy like Terry Bozzio, who doesn't hit as hard, but his musicianship is superior. He's more of a composer/percussionist. When it comes to someone like Jeremy, it's a very solid vibe, and my ear doesn't get pulled in all sorts of weird directions. He also knows how to listen well, which is very important to me.

"Something I feel every young drummer interested in working should know is, you have to be easy to work with. Being a great player is one thing, but relationships are bound by the type of person you are and the impressions you make. Jeremy is *very* easy to work with. His enthusiasm is inspiring. There isn't a challenge that he says he can't handle. And I believe him."

become very comfortable playing odd-time signatures. I'm not really into technique, and I consider myself a self-taught player. I never got into analyzing the mathematics of the music. But it just felt natural to me to play the odd time signatures, because I had heard them and practiced them so much.

MD: What was your first real pro session?

Jeremy: I was in the progressive rock band Dali's Dilemma when I was eighteen years old. It was a typical prog band with long songs and lots of odd time signatures. It was a great experience because it was the first time I'd recorded in a professional situation. It forced me to learn to play as perfectly as possible, which wasn't easy when you're playing fifteen-minute songs with odd time signatures all over the place. I'm very proud of that record for all those reasons.

After that I was called to do another progressive project called Leonardo. I did their record, *The Absolute Man*, with Trent Gardner, which we recorded at Steve Smith's studio. It was another heavy project with lengthy tunes and lots of odd times. That again was a great experience, requiring me to play intricate parts as perfectly as possible.

MD: Where did you go after Dali's Dilemma?

Jeremy: After doing the Leonardo project

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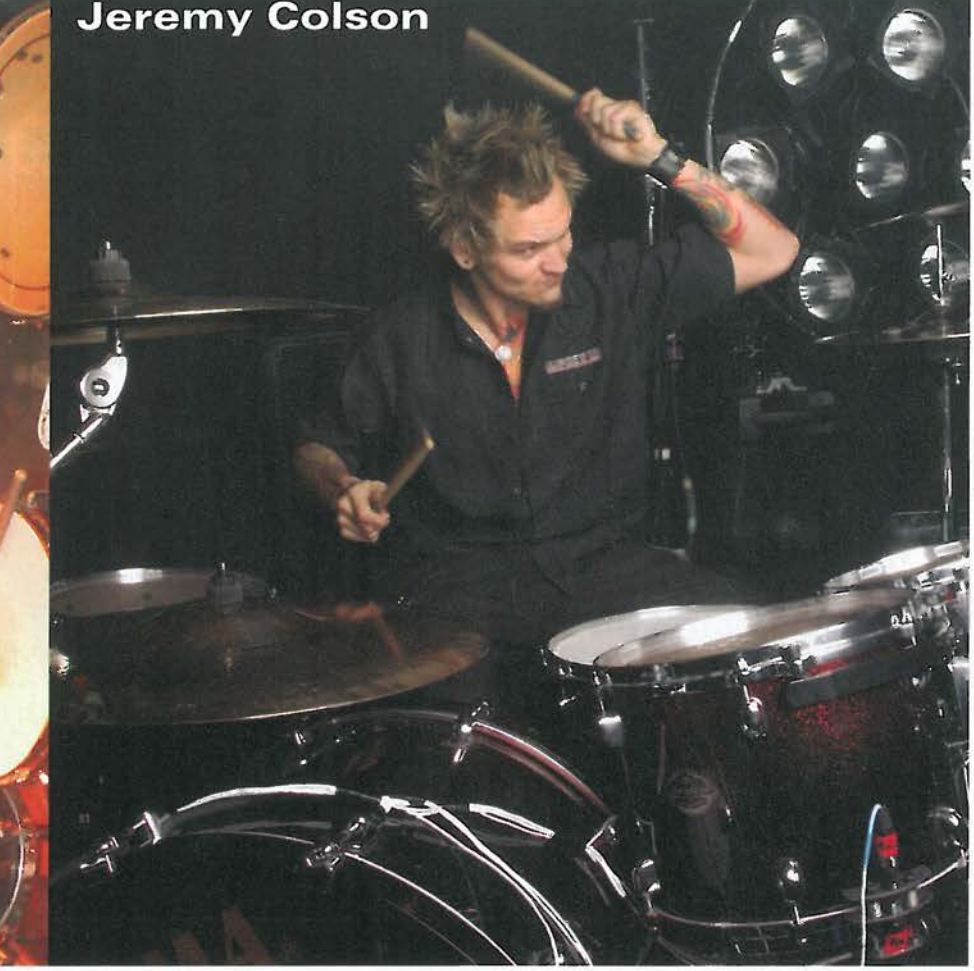

with Trent Gardner, I left Dali's Dilemma and got completely out of that style of music. I lost all interest in progressive music and got heavily into punk rock and heavy metal. I completely changed my style of playing to a more raw, aggressive, hard-hitting approach. That's the ironic part of where my career has led me to this point. Now, working with Steve Vai, it's like coming full circle and incorporating the best of both worlds. I'm using what I learned from my early years of playing progressive music as well as my more recent, aggressive, hard-hitting style.

MD: What is your technique like at this point after making such drastic changes?

Jeremy: My technique is based on how high I can get my sticks in the air. I play matched grip. In my left hand I use the Vater Morgan Rose stick, which is a double butt-end stick. In my right hand I use the Vater XD Rock stick. I know most players like to use the same size stick in both hands. But for me, because of how hard I hit and because I want the rimshot to be as strong as possible, I like the feel of the double butt stick.

I would like to use the Morgan Rose stick with both hands, but with Steve Vai's music I need a stick with a tip for more articulation on the cymbals. My style and technique is very aggressive. My favorite drummer right now is Shannon Larkin with Godsmack. I watch him play, and to me, *that's* what it's all about. I'm not really into drummers that have super chops and are very technical. I like drummers that are more groove-oriented, very aggressive, have some showmanship, and give one hundred and ten percent. That's really what got me the Vai gig.

MD: So what caused this major turn around in your musical preference?

Jeremy: Another record I did, which was kind of the turning point for me, was with guitarist James Murphy, who was with Testament. I played on half the material and Deen Castronovo did the other half. I actually got to watch Deen record, and that was a great experience for me because he's one of the greatest rock drummers on earth.

From that point, I started working with a friend named Glen Alvelais, who also played with Testament and Forbidden. We formed a band called LD50, which was heavy and Pantera-like in style. That band turned my playing around from a progressive style to a more powerful, aggressive, groove-oriented style. That's when I really found the musical direction I'd been looking for, which was more about power and strong groove.

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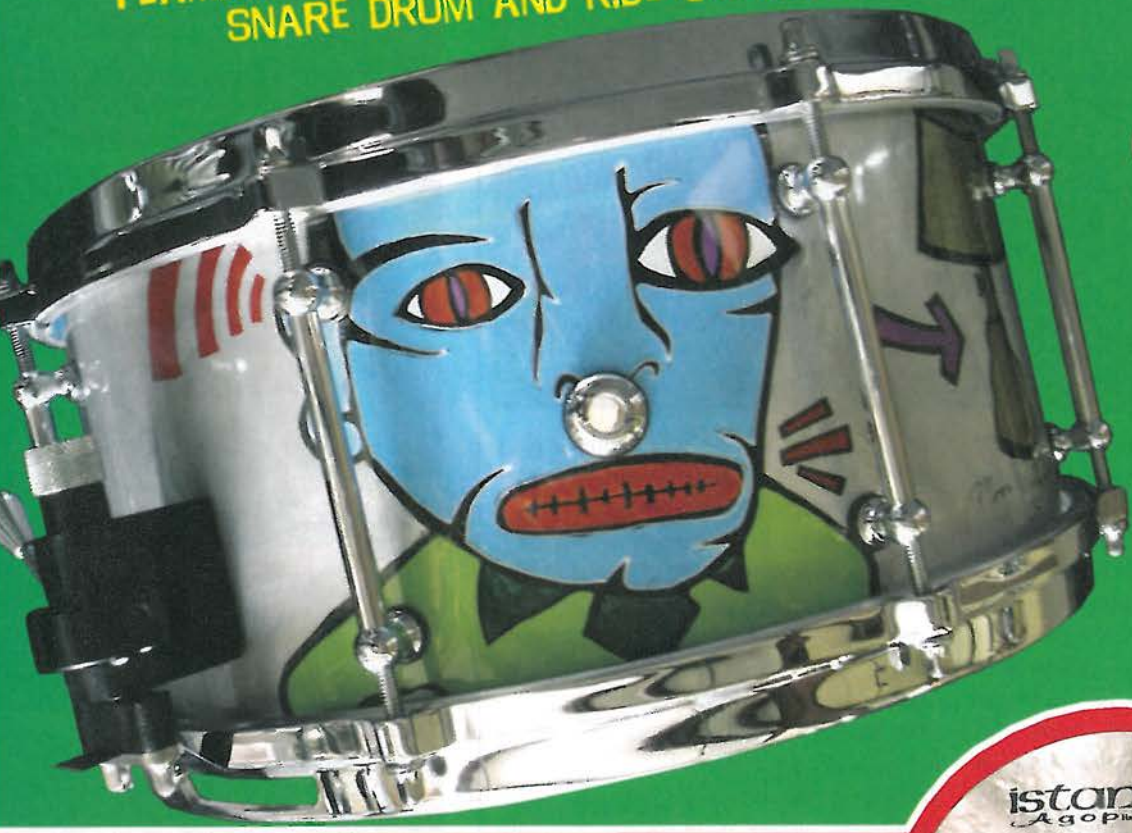

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Shortly after that, I got the opportunity to play with a band called Apt. 26, which was Black Sabbath bassist Geezer Butler's son's band. That was my first experience of extensive touring. We did some big shows like OzzFest and toured with some big-name bands. The music was more industrial and I had to play along with sequencers, which was easy because I've always been comfortable working with a click. A lot of the Steve Vai music is played along with a click in concert.

MD: Do you like working with a click in a live setting?

Jeremy: I like the comfort zone with the click, knowing the time is perfect. Using the click with Vai in concert is different from anything I've ever done. I use a Tama Rhythm Watch, which is positioned right next to my hi-hat. A lot of the parts are heavily orchestrated, so the click actually becomes another instrument for me. I'm only using it in certain sections of songs, so I'm turning it on and off throughout the show. But it becomes a tool to help execute parts more accurately within the original tempos of the recordings. It's also helpful, in my defense, if someone in the band feels that my time is rushing or dragging.

"Recording Vai's music was the first time I was pushed to my physical and mental limits, and then he pushed me beyond that."

MD: So what happened with Apt. 26 that led you to the Vai gig?

Jeremy: That period was a very difficult time in my life. Even though I was touring with a famous musician's son, the band wasn't doing well. It wasn't what I had hoped for. I was very green about life on the road, and after a while it didn't feel like it was what I was supposed to be doing.

So I returned home from England and began dealing with some personal issues, like getting clean and sober. That's when I got the call to tour with The Michael Schenker Group, which probably wasn't the best decision for me at the time because of issues that Michael Schenker had as well, which ended up cutting that tour short. But it did give me the opportunity to feel like I was being appreciated as a player again. I got to sing background vocals and play solid grooves. The experience made me realize that playing for the song is what I really wanted to do.

After the Schenker tour, I came home and got a call to do guitarist Marty Friedman's solo record, *Music For Speeding*. That ended up being one of the best sessions I've ever done. He was great to work with. I was allowed to help develop the songs and offer my input in the creation of the music. *That's* when I felt I had found my direction as a player. Even though Marty's music was instrumental and some of it was pretty technical, my approach was very groove-oriented.

I feel that in order to find your own unique style, you have to go through different phases as a player. I'm into a different style of drumming now from when I was a teenager. It wasn't until recently that I became confident in what I portrayed as a drummer. I always felt I had to be a certain type of drummer in order to fit into different musical situations. But now I say, "This is what I do," and you either like it or you don't.

MD: Do you feel that the negative experience with Apt. 26 led to your depressed state and brought on your substance abuse on the road?

Jeremy: Absolutely. I think that a lot of musicians watch VH-1's *Behind The Music* with groups like Mötley Crüe and think that it would be such a cool lifestyle to get into, and maybe some guys can do it and handle it well. But for me, that lifestyle was very addictive. I also had dealt with issues of depression when I was younger, so that environment is something that can be very dangerous for a personality like mine.

After touring with that band, I came home and was miserable. I guess I had to hit rock bottom before I could finally take control. I was playing in a punk band in San Francisco and it was going nowhere. Then, out of the blue, I got the call about the Steve Vai gig.

MD: How did that come about?

Jeremy: Well, first I have to mention the fact that a lot of these gigs have come through a guy named Mike Varney, who is the head of Shrapnel Records. He discovered me when I was seventeen and he has always pushed for me. It's true that, a lot of the time, it's who you know, and I want to thank Mike for always supporting me and putting my name out there. I am forever grateful to him because he's been a great friend and he's always recommended me first when someone was looking for a drummer.

MD: Including the Vai gig?

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Jeremy: Yes. Vai had mentioned to Mike that he was looking for drummers to audition, and Mike again recommended me. So Steve called me up and invited me to audition.

MD: After you got the call, did you immediately jump into the shed and start sharpening up your technique, knowing that you were following in the footsteps of Virgil Donati and Mike Mangini?

Jeremy: My first thought was, Okay, here I am, some kid playing in a punk band in San Francisco on Tuesday nights in a hole-in-the-wall bar, and I'm going to audition for a guy who has worked with some of the most technically advanced drummers in the world. I expected him to be looking for a drummer who was very chops-oriented. But I told myself that I was confident in who I was as a player, that I've developed my own style, and that I would go down there with my aggressive attitude and do what I do and he'd either like it or not.

MD: And when you went for the audition…

Jeremy: I was the first drummer to audition. I stayed over at the studio, and Steve and I talked the night before we played about drummers and music, just getting to know each other. The next morning I left the guest room at the studio and walked down into the kitchen, half asleep, and there's Steve Vai and Billy Sheehan sitting there. So I grabbed a coffee and said, "Okay, are you guys ready to play?" We went into the studio, and he hadn't given me any music to learn, so we just started playing. We clicked immediately.

MD: So he didn't ask you to learn any material for the audition?

Jeremy: No, but when we got in the studio, one of the first things he played me was a groove on the new recording from a tune called "Freak Show Excess," which has an odd-time part. I picked that up right away from my early experiences of learning prog stuff by ear when I was a teenager. I didn't even know what time signature it was in. I just felt the groove and started playing it.

We had a great time jamming, and the next day Steve left me a message saying that the gig was mine if I wanted it. He also said that he enjoyed my playing and really liked my enthusiasm, which I feel is what really helped get me the gig. I feel that a big part of working is getting along with other musicians and having the right attitude. I like to have a good time when I play, and I feel like the luckiest guy in the world to get to do what I love doing for a living. I don't really know how to do anything else, and I'm covered with tattoos, so that really limits my job opportunities in the corporate world. [laughs]

MD: What were the recording sessions like with Vai?

Jeremy: I started working with Steve a little over two years ago. I had heard stories that he was really hard on drummers and wanted things to be perfect. But I didn't let that freak me out, because he knew what type of player I was when he hired me. At the same time, I was ready to take whatever suggestions he had because he's such a musical genius. I was excited to learn from his ideas and suggestions to help me grow as a player.

One thing I'm most grateful for is his patience, because certain things don't come quickly to me, and sometimes I need a lot of repetition to get something down. Steve is very particular about what he wants, but he's also very patient in the studio about getting things right. Recording his music was the first time I was pushed to my physical and mental limits, and then he pushed me *beyond* that to do things that I never thought I could do. I came away feeling like I had grown as a total musician and not just a drummer who learned some new licks.

MD: Were most of your parts written out, or did he allow you to create your own ideas?

Jeremy: Some parts were written, and Steve had programmed certain parts that he wanted played exactly as he had programmed them. Other times we would just start with an idea and then keep working on it until it became the right part for the song. I can't think of any other musician that I would want to dedicate so much time to, because he is so far beyond anyone else I've ever worked with. It's been an honor to work with Steve.

MD: Does he expect you to play the songs note-for-note in concert?

Jeremy: Only certain parts. A lot of his material is orchestrated, so the parts that were created for certain songs are perfect for that piece and wouldn't sound good if you changed them.

What happens a lot is, after you play certain songs night after night, certain parts start to evolve on stage and new parts develop naturally. Most of the time I'll play what's on the record, but for sections that aren't directly related to what Steve's doing on guitar, I have the option to improvise and create new ideas. On most orchestrated parts, the sound source may change from a tom to a snare, but the rhythmic part of the song remains the same.

MD: Speaking of sound sources, let's talk about the fact that you're using such a small kit in a progressive band, which is typically

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September 19-23, 2005

One lucky *Modern Drummer* reader will win a trip to Clearwater, Florida for a week of intensive study at The Players School Of Music.

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For bios on the instructors and information about the school, visit www.playerschool.com.

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Consumer Disclosure

1. Send a 3.5" x 5.5" or 4" x 6" postcard with your name, address, email address, and telephone number to: MD/Players School Contest, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. 2. Enter as often as you wish, but each entry must be mailed separately. 3. ODDS OF WINNING PRIZE DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 4. CONTEST BEGINS 5/1/05 AND ENDS 6/30/05. POSTCARDS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY 6/30/05 AND RECEIVED BY 7/6/05. 5. Grand Prize Drawing: One (1) winner will be selected by random drawing on July 15, 2005. Winner will be notified by phone on or about July 15, 2005. 6. Employees and their immediate families of Modern Drummer, Players School Of Music, and their affiliates are ineligible. 7. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. 8. Open to residents of the US and Canada, 18 years of age or older. Void where prohibited by law. 9. Grand Prize: one all-expenses-paid trip to Clearwater, Florida. Includes tuition for the Players School Of Music One Week Intensive, round-trip airfare, motel accommodations, transportation from airport to motel, and transportation to and from school each day. Taxes, if any, are the sole responsibility of the winner. No substitutions or cash alternatives. Approximate retail of contest: $1,700. 10. All participants and/or entrants release Modern Drummer Publications, The Players School Of Music and their agents, successors, assigns, licenses, advertising and promotion agencies, and affiliated companies, and all of their employees, officers, directors, and shareholders from and against any and all claims and damages arising in connection with their participation and/or entry in the giveaway and/or awarding or use of any prize awarded in this giveaway. 11. Sponsored by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, (973) 239-4140. 12. This game subject to the complete Official Rules. For a copy of the complete Official Rules or the winner's name, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Modern Drummer Publications/Players School/Official Rules/Winners List, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009.

the setting for the mega monster kit.

Jeremy: When I was younger and into progressive music, I had a big kit. But as I got more into metal and punk, I didn't want all that stuff. Now I'm much more impressed with a guy who can totally rip on a four-piece kit and a couple of cymbals than a guy who has tons of drums and cymbals all over the place. Especially for me, being a hyperactive person, if I have all that stuff around me, I'll end up hitting it, and that will only take away from what my purpose is, which is to keep the groove solid so that the audience can feel it.

In order for me to portray what I'm all about, I prefer a small kit with large drums. With Vai, I have 10" and 13" rack toms up front and 15" and 16" floor toms to my right. If I could get away with a four-piece kit, I would, but his music requires more voices. I tune the 10" tom up higher and use it as more of an accent drum for quick orchestrated things. I tune the 13", 15", and 16" drums down as low possible, to get that Dave Grohl kind of deep sound. And I love my 18x24 bass drum. I used a 22" for awhile, but the 24" birch drum gives me that big, boomy sound I like.

MD: How do you like the Tama Starclassic Performer Birch shells?

Jeremy: Ever since I started playing drums, when I was ten years old, I always loved Tama drums. My dream was to get a red Tama kit. So when Tama contacted me to do an ad for the Starclassic Performer Birch drums, I asked them about using a red kit. They showed me the new red sparkle fade finish and I fell in love with them.

I love birch shells because they have that quick, punchy attack. I'm very grateful to have an endorsement with Tama because they're such a great company to work with. They make the greatest-sounding drums on the planet.

MD: Do you use a double bass pedal?

Jeremy: Yes, and that's the other thing I've always loved about Tama: They have great hardware. I've tried all the other pedals on the market, but the Iron Cobra is the ultimate double pedal for me.

MD: How do you approach your double bass technique?

Jeremy: My approach is similar to guys like Vinnie Paul, who have some technique, but who focus on the groove. For me, the option to use double bass for certain parts is more straight-ahead and not so technical.

MD: What heads are you using?

Jeremy: I use Aquarian heads. In the studio, I used the Focus-X heads. For live playing, I use their double-ply heads because I hit really hard. My kick drum head is the Super-Kick II, which is the best bass drum head I've ever played. That's the main reason I went with Aquarian, because I've always loved those bass drum heads. I use a really heavy Tama bass drum beater with the adjustable weight all the way up to the top of the shaft. I also put a pillow against the batter head because I like to play into the head and rest the beater on it.

MD: Cymbals?

Jeremy: I use a Sabian HHX Power Bell ride, two AAX Metal crashes, and a pair of 14" XCelerator hats. With Vai, I add another AAX Metal crash and an AAX China. I've always broken a lot of cymbals, so the AAX Metal crashes are perfect for me because they're heavier and last much longer.

MD: Do you still practice and work on developing your style further?

Jeremy: Absolutely. I'm pretty intense with practicing, but it's not so much focused on technique as it is endurance. I'm a very physical player, which requires a lot of endurance. I'll start out on a treadmill for about thirty minutes. Then I'll lock myself in this little room with my drums and turn the heater on until it's like a sauna so I can really sweat. Then I'll push myself physically in terms of how hard I hit the drums while I practice along with CDs that I enjoy.

I don't like to practice just technique or soloing. In fact, I went to see Virgil Donati play the other night, and after listening to him play this amazing solo, I thought, "Oh great, now I've got to go home and figure out a solo to play for the Vai tour to follow this guy." Virgil did Steve's previous tour.

MD: What solo ideas have you come up with?

Jeremy: It's a whole different vibe than the typical cliché drum solo. We bring a big percussion kit to the front of the stage and also incorporate some electronic percussion. I play some licks from the song "Under It All," which is solo-oriented anyway. I also use some other tracks while I play that piece. It's very tribal, musical, and fun for the audience. I'm obviously not going to try to compete with the solo spots that Mike Mangini and Virgil Donati have done with Vai, because I'm not that kind of player. My thing is an all-out, crazy, aggressive, groove-oriented vibe. I incorporate *that* into my solo spot.

To hear Jeremy Colson and Steve Vai, tune in to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.

Drums Tap Fusion

The Funky Feet Of Jerry Nitzberg

by Jorge Spelvin

Jerry Nitzberg has taken the phrase "marching to the beat of a different drummer" to a unique new level. The Baltimore drummer has developed a stand-up style that does away with the bass drum entirely. In its place, Jerry has installed wireless electronic triggers into the heels of dancing shoes, allowing him to create "bass drum" rhythms while he grooves to his own beats.

"It feels so natural to stand up and play," says Jerry. "Once your hands get going, your body and your feet just want to follow. Drummers are the timekeepers in bands, and they're usually very good dancers. My system basically allows me to play a drumset as if I was linking Keith Moon and Tommy Tune."

"Once your hands get going, your body and your feet just want to follow."

Nitzberg with his trigger-heel drumming/dancing shoes

Five years of tap and modern dance instruction as a child, along with countless dance recitals, provided the foundation for Jerry's stand-up footwork. At the age of twelve he became a dance-committee member on a popular 1960s TV dance show in Baltimore.

When the British Invasion hit American shores, Jerry took up drumming...on pillows. He had to borrow a friend's drumset to audition for his first gig. But he quickly advanced from playing at teen centers to drumming in bands that opened for The Fifth Dimension, Blood, Sweat & Tears, B.B. King, and The Four Seasons.

Then, life happened. Jerry fell in love, married, and raised two kids with his wife of thirty-two years. But he never lost sight of his dreams, and his "inner drumbeat" never stopped. For the past ten years he's focused on turning his drumming-and-dancing performance concept into reality.

"The modern drumset hasn't changed structurally since it was created for jazz bands in the 1920s," says Jerry. "The drummer is the only musician on stage forced to stay seated while playing his or her instrument. All other performers can move and groove to the music, allowing their full showmanship to shine through.

"Well," Jerry enthuses, "welcome to the future. It's time to give the drummer some."

For further information on Jerry Nitzberg's stand-up drumming system, contact Jerry at geminijer@msn.com.

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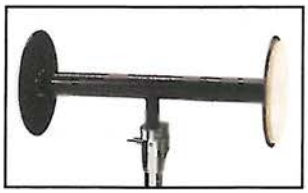
A Litter Of Five

New Mapex Black Panther Snare Drums

Mapex has added five new models to its Black Panther snare drum lineup. The new models are designed to be simpler and more economical than comparable premium-quality drums. All five feature chrome hardware, single-point-of-contact lugs, 2.3-mm Mapex Powerhoops, and Remo heads.

The 5½x13 Premium series black-plated brass ($509) and natural-grain maple drums ($529) are said to feature a tight, full sound for drummers who need a small-diameter main snare. The 6½x14 Premium series maple ($539) and Deep Forest walnut ($559) are multipurpose snares for everything from whisper-soft brushwork to bashing backbeats. A 5½x10 Premium series maple drum ($499) comes with its own mounting bracket, and can be mounted on a tom holder or sit in a snare basket. It's designed to produce tight, crisp rimshots as well as subtle and articulate ghost notes.

(615) 793-2050, www.mapexdrums.com.



More Than Just Sticks

Vic Firth Handheld Percussion And Heavy Hitter Basspad

Vic Firth's product line now includes a collection of handheld percussion instruments designed to improve the sound and musical experience of percussion students. The collection includes a maple woodblock ($19), a Concert Tambourine ($27) with Optimum Angle jingles for a clear, articulate sound, a Concert Triangle ($32) with a Multi-Dynamic beater for increased control at all dynamic levels, maracas ($17) that feature wood handles and synthetic shells for a full sound and reduced chance of breakage, traditional rosewood claves ($16), and double-pair of Table Castanets ($35), which offer authentic tone and the easy play associated with more expensive tension-controlled models.

Vic Firth also now offers the Heavy Hitter Basspad for marching bass drum practice. It features gum rubber pads on a "barbell" design that mounts on a cymbal stand. Players can see their stick angles, stick heights, and "side-to-side line-up" while practicing on a 14"-wide setup just like an actual marching bass drum. List price is $75.

(781) 326-3455, www.vicfirth.com.

African Motif

Remo Leon Mobley Djembe

Remo's key-tuned djembe is popular for its portability, tunability, durability, and playability. A new signature version of this model has been created for percussionist Leon Mobley. It features a fabric finish with traditional African Adinkra symbols in an overall color scheme highlighted by the African Nation colors of red, yellow, black, and green.

The new Leon Mobley Designer's Touch fabric finish is designed by Remo's graphic artists, using state-of-the-art equipment and technologies while working closely with Leon's vision and inspiration. This new technology enables artwork to be transferred directly onto fabric to create unique images for Remo's instruments. Five sizes are available, and prices range from $229 for a 10"-diameter, 24"-high drum to $459 for an 18"-diameter, 28"-high drum.

(661) 294-5600, www.remo.com.

Down From The North

Monolith Odyssey 10th Anniversary Curly Maple Drumsets And Special Edition Cherry Snares

Canada's Monolith Drums is celebrating its tenth anniversary by introducing Odyssey 10th Anniversary Curly Maple Limited Edition drumsets. The seven-piece kits are finished in high-gloss caramel fade, and feature solid brass teardrop lugs, variable-tension snare releases, and Nexus G2 Universal Mounting System tom mounts. These kits are offered in a 50-set, serialized edition, at $4,999 each.

Odyssey Special Edition Cherry 5½x14 snare drums feature 10-ply cherry shells with 6-ply reinforcement rings. They come finished in a rich bordeaux stain with either high-gloss or satin lacquer, and are fitted with a variable-tension snare release, triple-flanged hoops, and solid brass teardrop lugs. Chrome, black chrome, and satin nickel are available hardware colors. List price is $699.

(905) 689-6173, www.monolithdrums.com.

Made Ya Look!
Spaun Exotic Burl Finishes

Spaun is now offering Exotic Burl drumkits and snare drums. The outer veneer is a highly figured burl that can be combined with Spaun's virtually unlimited lacquer finishes. The Exotic Burl option is available (for a 15% upcharge) on Custom series 100% maple kits as well as Recording series 100% birch kits.
(909) 971-7761, www.spaundrums.com.

Funny Name...Nice Stuff
BIB Custom Drums

BIB Drums is a recent addition to the ever-growing roster of high-quality custom drum operations. All BIB drums feature 100% rock maple shells made by Keller. Those shells are prepared to BIB's precise specifications, then combined with BIB's own custom craftsmanship and original hardware to create top-quality professional drums. According to the company, all BIB drums are completely hand-finished using the highest-quality materials.
(732) 816-1948, www.bibdrums.com.

New Kid On The Electronic Block

R.E.T. Custom Electronic Drums

Rhythm Electronic Technology Percussion is a new company offering custom electronic drumkits, including the NS2 (Natural Series). The NS2 triggering system is claimed to provide the same feel as an acoustic kit (owing to the use of standard 13" drumheads), but with the sounds and benefits of an electronic kit. A special muffling system cuts stick noise by 60 decibels while providing natural dynamics and stick bounce. Hand stained drumshells come in six shades, and can also be custom stained.

R.E.T.'s NS2 trigger pads are compatible with the latest sound modules. They feature dual tom triggering, as well as locking Neutrik connectors. Smartrigger trigger cymbals are provided as part of the kit. The system's mounting rack is double-braced for durability and collapsible for easy transport. R.E.T. Percussion backs their products with a one-year warranty and a custom shop certificate of authenticity.

(217) 620-8410, www.retpercussion.us.

Light On The Field, Loud In The Hall

Premier Lite Marching Drums And Rosewood Concert Xylophones

Premier has completely updated and improved its range of Premier Lite marching drums. The drums are specifically designed for school and student use, especially by younger players. They feature high-quality chrome fittings and a choice of black or white wrapped finishes.

Premier Lite shells feature a thin-wall design, with reinforced bearing edges for extra strength and excellent low-frequency response and "punch." A variety of available sizes, as well as a new selection of carriers, allows expression of a wide range of musical ideas. New low prices make them even more appealing for schools and students. Premier also offers multi-tenor sets, with or without carriers, in all the most popular configurations.

The newest introductions to Premier's range of mallet instruments are Pro-Concert and Concert series 3½-octave rosewood xylophones. The Pro-Concert xylophone includes a note frame and resonator blocks constructed from premium oak, finished in a light oak stain. The Concert series xylophone features a black composite note frame for all-weather use.

Both instruments measure 59½" in length by 33" in width, with playing heights from 35" to 40". They're fitted with gold-finish graduated aluminum resonators. Standard tuning is A442, with other tunings available as special order.

(781) 659-4969, www.premier-percussion.com.

Pro-Concert rosewood xylophone

Heavy Metal, Indeed
ThunderEcho Drums Trash Kat

The Trash Kat, from ThunderEcho Drums, is a 20"-diameter floor tom with a shell created from a 22⅝"-tall galvanized trash can. It's fitted with three legs that adjust its playing height from 24" to 33½". The unique drum was created by drummer Kevin Reed to combine an urban look with a thunderous, resonant sound. The Trash Kat can be played with sticks, mallets, or hands to complement a traditional drumkit, to lead drum circles, or as a stand-alone auxiliary percussion instrument. It has also been called a "poor man's timpani" when substituted in an orchestra pit. List price is $269.77.

(330) 225-1488, www.thunderechodrums.com.

Get With The Program
Zoom RT-223 RhythmTrak

The Zoom RT-223 RhythmTrak from Samson Technologies is a small, lightweight, low-profile drum machine. It comes with 70 built-in drumkits with acoustic drum sounds for rock, R&B, funk, and jazz. An additional analog rhythm machine provides techno and hip-hop sounds, and ethnic percussion sounds are available. There are also five human voice "beat box" style percussion kits.

The RT-223 comes with 440 ready-to-use drum patterns, along with phrase variations including intro, fill-in, and ending patterns. By combining these, users can easily whip up backing rhythms. Programming patterns is done on touch-sensitive drum pads. (The RT-223 records not only your timing, but also the dynamics of your finger work.) Up to 511 patterns can be created and stored. Visual cues provided by the self-lit pads and the FAST (Formula Assisted Song Translator) method make programming easy.

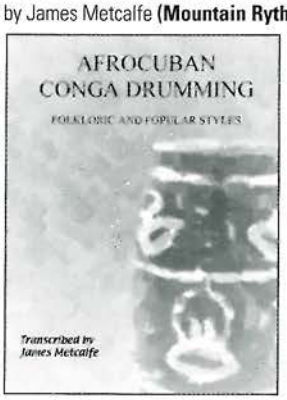
The RT-233 also has a foot pedal input jack for triggering beats during live performance.

(800) 328-2882, wwwzoomfx.com.

The Reference Shelf

AfroCuban Conga Drumming

by James Metcalfe **(Mountain Rythym)**



This book documents the primary Afro-Cuban folk drumming traditions involving the congas. The text and accompanying CD provide the reader with insight into the intricacies of this amazing tradition, with input from Cuban masters including Los Muñequitos de Matanzas, Miguel "Anga" Diaz, and others.

Conga players are given detailed breakdowns of all of the parts of many Afro-Cuban folkloric rhythms, including the guaguanco, yambu, and many lesser-known Cuban rhythmic gems. Also included are popular styles like tumbao, songo, and 6/8 patterns. The included CD allows isolation of some of the parts for individual practice. List price is $26.

(877) 292-3786. www.mountainrythym.com.

Lionel Hampton: Jazz Legend DVD

(Hudson Music)

This DVD presents the life and music of the world-renowned drum and percussion artist Lionel Hampton. "Hamp" virtually established the vibraphone as a jazz instrument, and during his lengthy career he set the stage for a style of music that was destined to be called rock 'n' roll.

The DVD features vintage film clips and rare photographs from the 1930s through the 1990s, with commentary from contemporary mallet master Mike Mainieri and award-winning drummer/percussionist Steve Smith. Other jazz legends appearing with Hamp in the historic clips include Benny Goodman, Gene Krupa, Teddy Wilson, Milt Buckner, and Betty Carter. List price is $24.95.

(888) 796-2992, www.hudsonmusic.com.

And What's More

Spacemuffin System III electronic drumkits from **BOOM THEORY** are said to emulate as closely as possible the look, feel, and dynamics of an acoustic drumset. They are also claimed to match the sensitivity of a mesh-head set (and be even quieter than Spacemuffins of the past), while still utilizing standard Mylar drumheads for a more familiar playing feel and response.
(253) 813-2666, www.boomtheory.com.

HART DYNAMICS claims that their Kontrol Screen Magnum single-ply drumheads are "the next generation" of mesh drumheads. Features include acoustic drum feel, extreme durability, and the quiet response associated with mesh-headed electronic drums. Hart Dynamics developed the proprietary material, and Aquarian Accessories is manufacturing the heads exclusively for Hart. Kontrol Screen Magnum heads are available in 8"–22" sizes for use on electronic drumkits, triggered acoustic drums, or practice kits.
(800) 769-5335, www.hartdynamics.com.

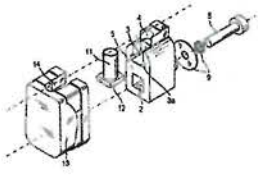
PRO-MARK's Drum Gum is a gel-like material designed to dampen but not deaden the sound of drums. It can be cut to virtually any size or shape, can be placed on the top or bottom head without falling off, and can be reused. Drum Gum can also be used on percussion instrumentslike wood blocks, cowbells, tambourines, djembes, bongos, and congas. List price is $9.95 for three strips in a resealable package.
(877) PRO-MARK, www.promark.com.

The **STEALTH 7000** is a microphone and accessory mount constructed of black anodized aluminum. It installs securely to a drum rim via the tension rods, and retracts to such a low profile that the drum can still fit in its case or bag for transport. The unit fits drums 6"–18" in diameter, and is compatible with tom suspension systems. List price is $29.95 each, or four for $99.95.
Www.stealth7000.com.

The **DUALLIST** double-action bass drum pedal now features a drive belt of Kevlar. According to the company, the new belt has been designed "to match the unique playing characteristics of the award-winning Duallist pedal with the right mix of power and smoothness." The material of the belt is said to minimize any loss of power between the player's foot and the bass drum beater. Retrofit belts for existing Duallist pedals are available from the company's Web site.
(011) 44 1-563-555999, www.theduallist.com.

The **RIM RISER** cross-stick enhancer was created by veteran drummer and drum tech James Shepherd in order to play a consistent cross-stick sound. By providing a raised "rim" striking surface, the Rim Riser gives the player a bit more room between the stick and the head, allowing for a better grip on the stick. Each Rim Riser is hand manufactured. Sizes are available for 12", 13", and 14" hoops in 6-, 8-, and 10-lug configurations, at $19.99 plus shipping and handling.
RimriserUSA@aol.com.

CRAVIOTTO solid-shell snare drums now feature the cam-action Trick GS007 snare throw-off. According to Craviotto, the advanced Trick strainer provides smooth, secure operation, with the increased reliability of machined aluminum components. The GS007 throw-off in brushed aluminum finish is now standard on Unlimited Edition models, and is available in a choice of brushed aluminum or black anodized finish on any Custom Shop or Limited Edition snare drum.
(831) 763-0855, www.craviottodrums.com.



RMV's newly patented "Mini-Mass" lugs are now standard on all Sonically Optimized Stage, Studio, and Stadium series drums. The design combines interlocking, injection-molded composite parts with steel lug nuts and screws, making the lugs smaller and lighter than conventional die-cast versions. This is said to allow increased shell vibration while providing the same durability offered by larger, heavier lugs.
(720) 839-4874, www.rmvdrums.com.

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-Modern Drummer, Feb. 2005-

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- Completely independently adjustable beater holders with 1" lateral adjustment each
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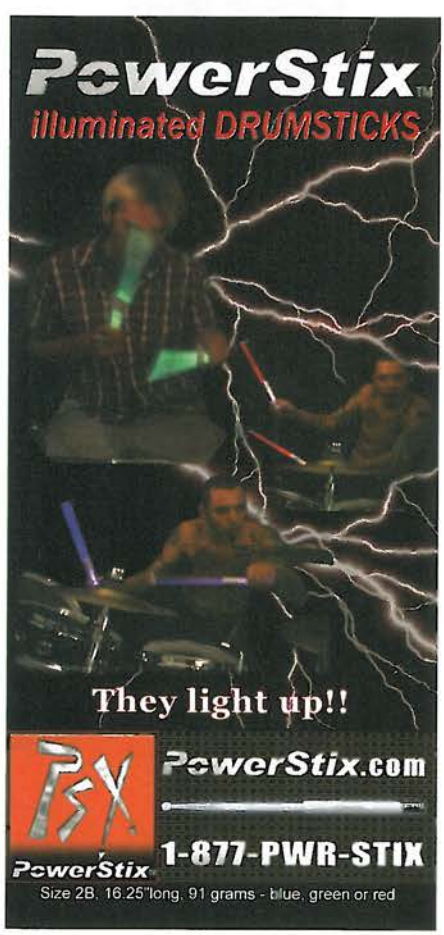

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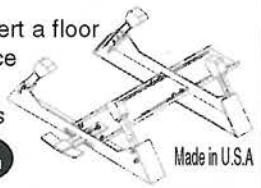
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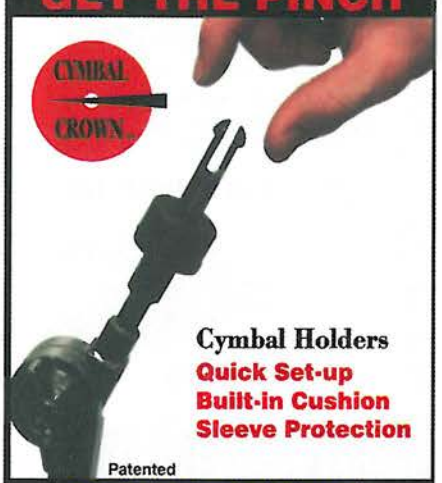

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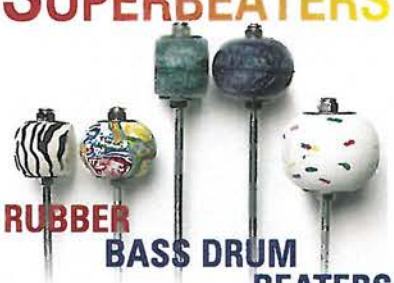
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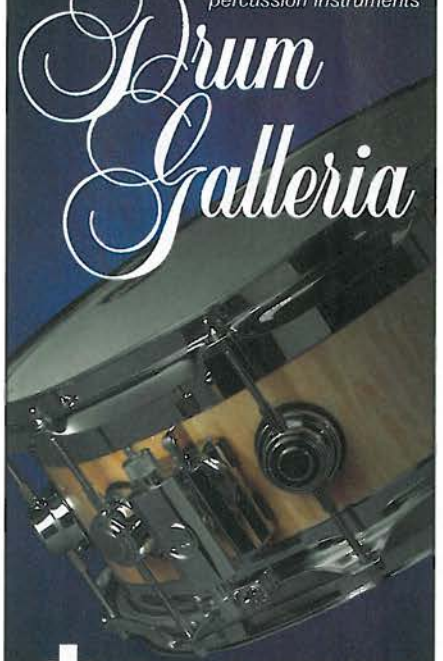
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RECORDINGS

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Glenn Hughes

Soul Mover (Sanctuary) ★★★★½

A brawling album that recalls energy-overflowing Deep Purple efforts like *Burn* and *Strormbringer*, the latest from ex-Purple bassist and singer Hughes is excellent, from its memorable, well-arranged songs and Hughes' crunchy vocals to chops-shredding performances from **CHAD SMITH**, **Dave Navarro**, and **JJ Marsh**. This is hard-edged ROCK, '70s style, but it's achieved with such consistency and strength that it sounds contemporary, not like a bunch of old farts reaching for past glories. Smith has never sounded better, slashing his hats and laying down a steel beat throughout. Sounding deeper and heavier than on much of his Chili Peppers work, Smith is energized by the English master. **Ken Micallef**

Terence Higgins & Swamp Grease

In The Bywater (Gris Gris Bag) ★★★★

Some drummer-led projects are hailed for *not* sounding like they're led by a drummer, like that's a good thing. Higgins makes sure the mark of the drums is all over his debut. He picks up where fusion heroes like Lenny White's Astral Pirates, Narada Michael Walden, Headhunters, and The Cobham-Duke Project left off. These are some sick grooves! Higgins stretches the limits of "behind the beat" on "In The Bywater," goes a little Dukey Stick on "Catharsis," and stretches to the outer spaces of funk on "Past Neptune." "Gotta Get Swamp Jiggy" is jubilant—trombone blasting, guitar scratching, bass thumping, and Higgins using his New Orleans roots as a hop-off point. (www.swampgrease.com) **Robin Tolleson**

Paul Motian/Bill Frisell/Joe Lovano

I Have The Room Above Her (ECM) ★★★½

The Picasso of jazz drummers, **PAUL MOTIAN** reveals his mastery in sly and disorienting ways. Like the great painter, Motian learned the rules before breaking them, which gives his abstract playing a sturdy foundation. He scatters deep-throated ride strokes around the pulse, landing on it for a while and then shuffling back off into the ether. This approach requires comrades with impeccable time, which Frisell and Lovano both possess. The trio, together nearly twenty years, corners the market on the kind of strange, melancholy almost-jazz that makes this LP a dark delight. Let the others paint a simple landscape; let the others play a steady beat. **Michael Parillo**

Mudvayne Lost And Found (Epic) ★★★½

Mudvayne have ditched their controversial makeup. (Remember the bloody bullet holes they sported at 2001's MTV Video Music Awards?) But frothing and intriguingly technical metal is still what they're really about, as proven by this latest album. On the thrashy and weird "Pushing Through," drummer **MATT McDONOUGH** balances various time signatures in a curious manner, and on the hook-crazed "Happy?" he busts out cool complexities. During "Fall Into Sleep," Matt's delicate touch complements subtle Tool-like guitar until the song explodes with passion. And his straight-up attack perfectly suits the rockin' "Forget To Remember." Who needs bullet holes with a set like this? **Jeff Perlah**

Elaine Hoffman Watts

I Remember Klezmer (independent) ★★★

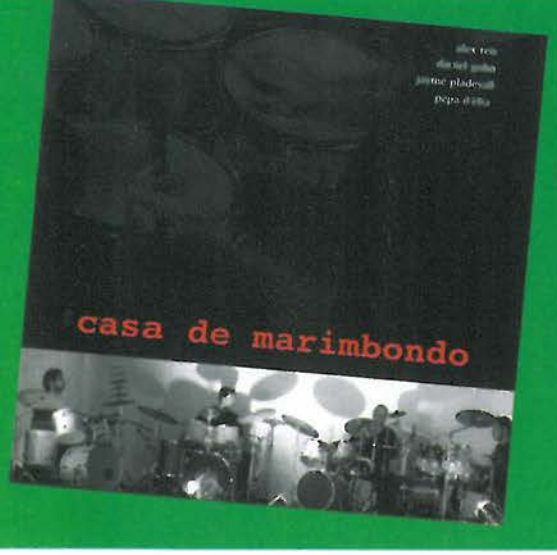
As a female, seventy-one-year-old klezmer drummer, Mrs. Watts has earned her stripes in barrier-busting. Born to a family with a long Ukrainian-rooted musical legacy, Watts is valued as an authentic link to the modern klezmer movement. Both klezmer connoisseurs and drummers will find historic interest (and fun) in her energetic drumming. Watts' style is faithful to its military drumming roots, delivering crackling rudiments and pulsing rolls phrased with the melody. Accompanied by her trumpeter daughter Susan and band, the senior snare master takes firm command. Paying tribute as guests are drummer notables of contemporary klezmer **DAVID LICHT** and **AARON ALEXANDER**, as well as former star student, funk master **GERRY BROWN**. A true passer of the torch! (www.cdbaby.com) **Jeff Potter**

Significant Reissues by Ken Micallef

Gong Angels Egg, You

Led by French drummer **PIERRE MOERLIN**, decades-spanning Canterbury group Gong is perhaps best known in the US for their '70s fusion-leaning albums with guitarist Allan Holdsworth. *Angels Egg* (1973) and *You* (1974) chronicle the band's more whimsical and investigational period, reflecting not only '60s hippie idealism but an astounding musical breadth that spanned jazz, chamber, British folk, and Indian strains, as well as Zappa-ish sound experiments that recall Roland Kirk jamming with The Chemical Brothers. Moerlin navigated Gong's ever-expanding rhythms (and inspired Moog synth solos) like a magic genie sailing on a silk carpet, his agile, organic, rolling time feel giving the scattershot music a pastoral yet energizing wallop. There are no songs here per se, but a seamless journey of odd-metered sounds and yes, sights, Gong still sounding light-years beyond the prevailing prog rock of the era. (Astralwerks)

Casa de Marimbondo (independent) 4½



From Brazil comes this drumset quartet featuring the playing of **ALEX REIS**, **DANIEL GOHN**, **JAYME PLADEVALL**, and **PEPA D'ELIA**. As can be expected, there's a heavy Brazilian flavor, but there's also liberal doses of funk and rock. The music, all composed by group members, often shifts from tight unison patterns to intense interplay between the drummers. The drum sound is impeccable, and the mix finds things moving left and right between the drummers, often at a dizzying pace. At just under thirty minutes, it may be short on length, but not on creativity. (www.casademarimbondo.com.br) **Michael Bettine**

Kenny Wayne Shepherd

The Place You're In (Reprise) 4

Blues guitar slinger Shepherd adds convincing lead vocals to his résumé and builds from a funky Southern blues/rock–meets–classic pop/rock framework to create a collection with commercial potential. Shades of Clapton, Skynyrd, Foghat, and the like cast a somewhat retro shadow on much of the hard-rocking material. Drummer **BRIAN TICHY** cooks up solid grooves with power and conviction. Tichy plays for the song while putting just the right amount of spice on the meat. **Mike Haid**

DJ Spooky Vs. Dave Lombardo

Drums Of Death (Thirsty Ear) 3

The first groove to appear on this DJ Spooky/**DAVE LOMBARDO** collaboration is a funky, ghost-stroked pattern—not really something expected from Slayer's stickman, whose trademarks are epic tom rolls and assaulting blast beats. Dig further into *Drums Of Death* and you'll encounter Lombardo spreading his metallic wings even further alongside the turntablism of DJ Spooky. There's a set of straightforward breaks on "Quantum Cyborg Drum Machine," a hyperactive, clangy dub feel on "Metatron," and even a no-nonsense rhythm track for vocalists **Dalek** and **Merideth Monk** on "Assisted Suicide." It's a successful collaborative affair for the pair, and hopefully won't be the last. **Waleed Rashidi**

New Monsoon

Live At The Telluride Bluegrass Festival (Sci Fidelity) 4

This banjo-parading septet supercharges hoe-down rhythms and jam-band esthetics with a percussion section that takes its cues from early Santana smacked silly by bluegrass pioneers Flatt & Scruggs. Drummer **MARTY YLITALO**, tabla virtuoso **RAJIV PARIKH**, and conguero **BRIAN CAREY** not only play like one very sweaty multi-limbed maniac, they offer Indian-styled vocal cadences that match the velocity of the band's shock-and-awe banjo/guitar riffs. That New Monsoon so effortlessly recalls everyone from Phish to some '60s jazz trio speaks to their technical mastery and our need for endlessly challenging music. **Ken Micallef**

John Butler Trio Sunrise Over Sea (Lava) 3

NICKY BOMBA isn't a tail-dragger, but his relaxed feel befits the jammy, semi-acoustic nature of songs that traverse such genres as reggae, Appalachian folk, Mississippi Hill Country blues, roots rock, and hip-hop. Bomba's infectious yet restrained funkified beats (check where Bomba's kick drops and neatly clips off in "Company Sin") dribble along as Aussie Butler warns of politics, power, and environmental decay. The drums-percussion-double bass meld of "Treat Yo Mama" and the collision of Bomba's sparse beats and Michael Barker's percussion and clanging *spoon* solo in "Zebra" are but two examples of JBT's earthy musical blend. This stuff cuts to the bone. **Will Romano**

Proggin'

Sky Saw, DDYGG, Zs, Forever Einstein by Michael Bettine

The ghost of King Crimson past is alive and well in four new releases this month. The percussion/zither (!) duo Sky Saw (along with a guest violinist) rips out a heavy *Larks' Tongue*–era Crimson vibe on their self-titled release. Drummer **YURI ZBITNOFF** is equally at home spinning creative rhythms on his drumkit or providing percussion backdrops like swelling gongs. (Lithiq)

With its melodic sax lines reminiscent of vintage Soft Machine, *Live At Joan's* by DDYGG features drummer **MARK DODGE** propelling a jazz/fusion instrumental workout. Dodge keeps the rhythms tight, punctuating things with a jazz drummer's sensibility. (NCM East)

Karate Bump by the sextet Zs finds dual drummers **BRAD WENTWORTH** and **ALEX HOSKINS** weaving a tribal rhythm behind the dual-guitar, dual-sax lineup. While intricately arranged, the music retains a sense of spontaneity. (Planaria)

Shifting rhythms and tight interplay mark the guitar-led trio Forever Einstein. Drummer **JOHN ROULAT** is adept at switching meters on the aptly named *Racket Science*. Imagine Crimson with twangy surf guitar riffs. (Cuneiform)

Taking The Reins

New drummer-led releases on CD

Claudio Scolari, *Reflex*,
www.claudioscolari.com

Anders Mogensen & Niclas Knudsen,
Featuring Matt Garrison,
www.CDJazz.com

Victor Y. See Yuen & William Catanzaro,
Evolution Suites,
www.cdbaby.com/cd/catanzaro1

Ron Bartlett, Sojourn,
www.cdbaby.com/cd/ronbartlett

Greg Holloway, *Turns*,
www.dcjazz.com/gregholloway

DVDs

Kodo One Earth Tour Special (Sony Music Japan)

level: all, $19.98, with CD

This is a wonderful DVD/CD of a concert by Japan's premier taiko ensemble at Setagaya Public Theater in Tokyo. This show represents the first time an outside choreographer worked with the group, and the collaboration with Tamasaburo Bando, Japan's premier Kabuki theater artistic director, is a winner. A cappella vocals open the concert and segue into a shuffle rhythm. The dynamics of the drumming and movement (which resemble a martial art) are astounding here and during each ensuing piece; it appears like all the artists are breathing together! Amazing lighting and camera work enhance the DVD, and the tonal variety of the many taiko drums and gongs keeps you on the edge of your seat. **David Licht**

Wes Crawford's Drumset Play-Along DVD (Music And Games 411)

level: beginner to intermediate, $29.99

Crawford's play-along, filmed from the drum throne perspective, delivers some fun pretenses about being in a band, plus a lot of good practical playing information. The narrator's dry wit will most likely fly over the heads of his intended (I'm assuming younger) target group, although the bassist and keyboardist seem tickled. The pasted-in live backdrops are generally not very inspiring, but maybe that's one of the points—many gigs aren't. After passing the audition, you survive the nightclub, wedding, and cruise-ship gigs, add a perky female vocalist, deal with a loud guitarist and a know-it-all producer, and get your first festival shot. Some of it is authentic, though in real life any self-respecting drummer would have called a band meeting to ask if they could please write some cooler, more ballsy material. (www.wescrawford.com) **Robin Tolleson**

Dream Theater Live At Budokan

(WSM/Atlantic)

level: all, $24.99

This two-DVD set features a recent concert at the famous Japanese hall, plus highlights of several other DT 2004 Japan dates in a well-produced documentary. The veteran road dogs offer up a realistic look at life on tour as they lick their wounds and continue to set a standard of technically proficient excellence. Disc One features the entire Budokan show. Disc Two contains bonus material including Mike Portnoy's drum solo and a multi-angle look at each player performing the intense "Instrumedley" piece. **Mike Haid**

BOOKS

Drum Rudiments: A Simple Approach

by Mat Marucci (Mel Bay)

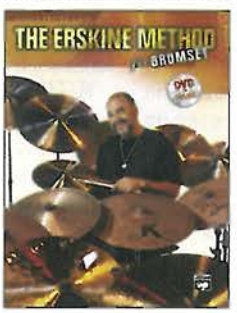
level: beginner to intermediate, $7.95

There may be only one real concept behind Marucci's book, but it could help some players get over a fear of the R word. Rather than see drummers scared off by the thought of forty rudiments to learn, Marucci breaks down all the rudiments to three basic strokes: singles, doubles, and flams. Then he suggests the player perform a single-stroke version of each rudiment. Reduce them to single wrist strokes, and then add the bounce strokes where applicable. According to the author, if the basic sticking is strong, when you add the double-stroke pattern it just takes off and flies. It is, at the very least, a good strengthening exercise. **Robin Tolleson**

The Erskine Method For Drumset

by Peter Erskine (Alfred)

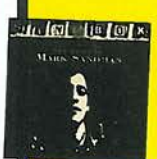
level: all, $39.95 (book with DVD), $14.95 (book), $24.95 (DVD)



Books geared towards "all levels" are market-friendly but problematic. With such sprawling scope, something has to be shortchanged. Spanning from "how to hold a stick" to a challenging solo transcription, *Erskine Method* may not be a prime choice for beginners seeking stepwise instruction. That being said, taken as a drumset smorgasbord, there's abundant wisdom here for body and mind. The package covers technique, rhythms, exercises, chart reading, and philosophies, along with quartet and solo performances. Erskine is best at combining "all levels" when teaching basics; advanced players will discover renewed awareness in "beginner" topics such as posture, breathing, and relaxation. **Jeff Potter**

Of Further Interest

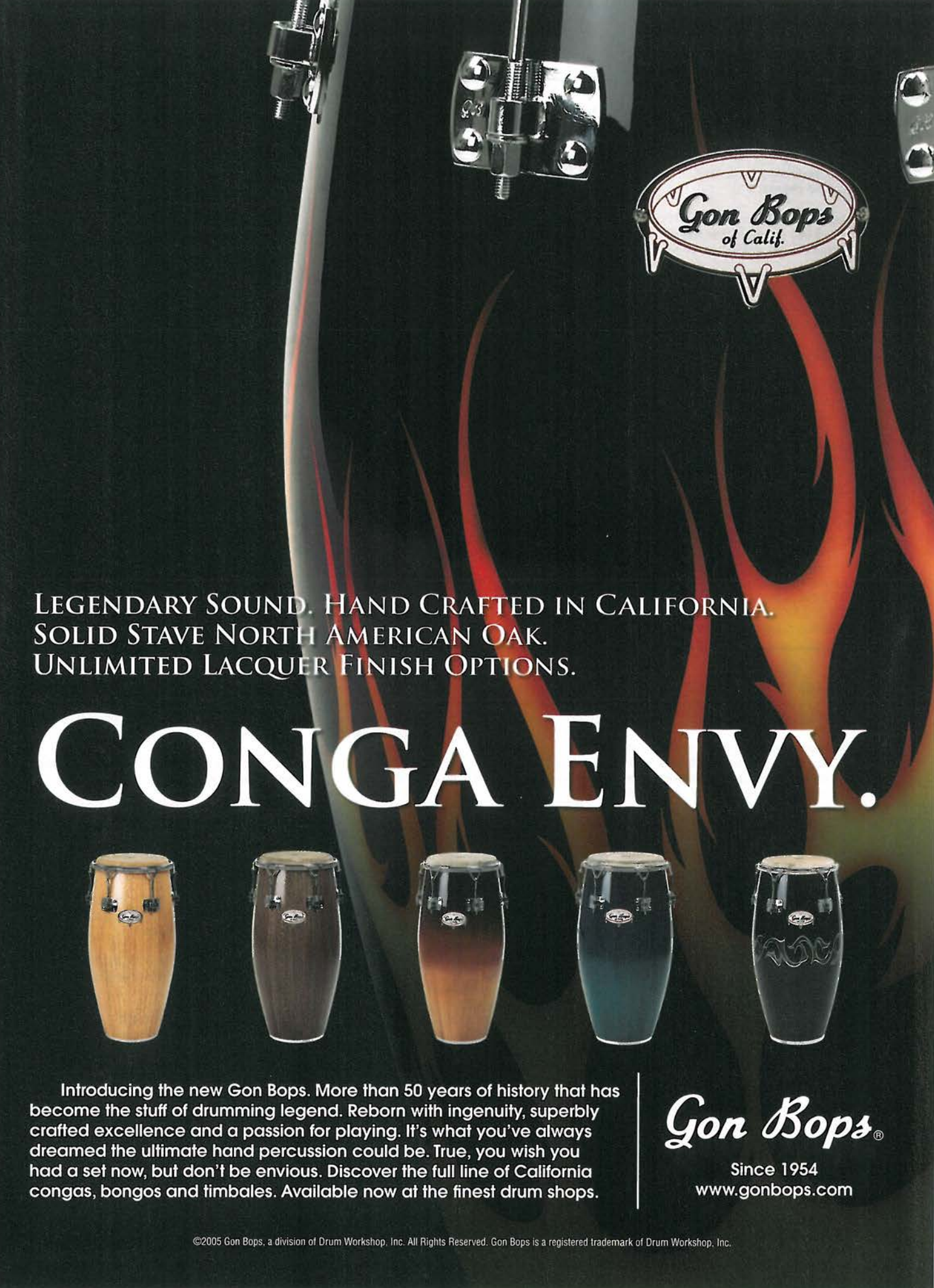
It Takes A Lot Of Balls by Travers & Appice features classic-rock guitar hero Pat Travers hooking up with Vanilla Fudge/Rod Stewart drumming legend **CARMINE APPICE** on a set of scorching tunes. Carmine has always had that certain *something*, and this is a fine place to hear it. (SPV)



Sandbox: The Music Of Mark Sandman is a new CD/DVD set that honors the life of Morphine's late, great singer/bassist. The package features the wonderfully supportive and soulful drumming of **BILLY CONWAY** and **JEROME DEUPREE**, among others. (Hi-N-Dry)

The latest in the excellent *Classic Albums* DVD series focuses on Nirvana's revolutionary long-player *Nevermind*, featuring **DAVE GROHL** on drums. (Eagle Vision)

Artful Norwegian drummer **JON CHRISTENSEN** meets accordionist/bandoneonist Dino Saluzzi for an afternoon of pure improvisation, and the result is *Senderos*, an album of remarkable tonal juxtapositions. (ECM)



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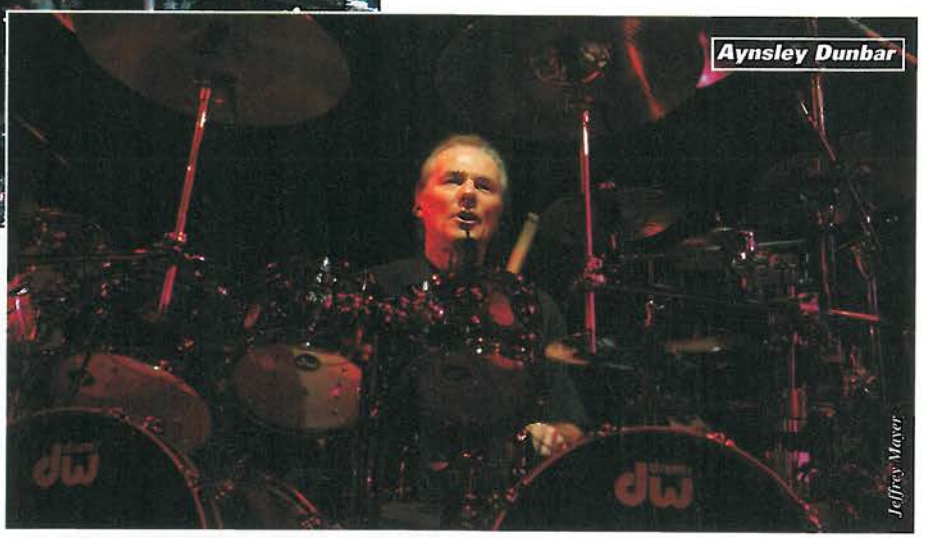
Journey Hollywood Walk Of Fame Event And Concert

Members of Journey accept their WOF award. From left: Steve Augeri, Jonathan Cain, Steve Perry, George Tickner, Neal Schon, Aynsley Dunbar, Robert Fleischman, Ross Valory, Steve Smith, and Deen Castronovo.



The Journey Walk Of Fame Ceremony And Concert was held this past January 24 in Hollywood, California. The ceremony was the awarding of plaques to all the current and former members of the band, in recognition of Journey's star being added to the Hollywood Walk Of Fame. The concert took place that evening at the Hollywood House Of Blues.

Over its twenty-eight year history, the multi-platinum band has included drummers **Aynsley Dunbar**, **Steve Smith**, and current drummer **Deen Castronovo**. It was cool to see all three on stage with Journey members Neal Schon, Jonathan Cain, Steve Augeri, Robert Fleischman, and Ross Valory.

Deen Castronovo's kit-crunching drumming got the packed crowd fired up quickly, and things never slowed down over the next two and half hours. Band founder Neal Schon hand-picked Deen for the nearly impossible task of replacing Steve Smith when Steve left to pursue his jazz interests. Deen's incredible drumming and great singing voice have added a dynamic that makes this generation of Journey very exciting to watch.

After Deen performed the first seven songs, Aynsley Dunbar took over the kit to perform Journey's first monster hit, "Wheel In The Sky," as well as "Lights" (both of which he helped write during his time with the band). Aynsley's hard-rocking, no-nonsense approach to the tunes demonstrated why he has played on so many hit records with a variety of successful rock bands.

Steve Smith received a huge ovation when it was his turn to play. He kicked off a blues jam that became the introduction to "She Walks Like A Lady," then played a jazz-blues-swing solo that generated the kind of rock 'n' roll applause that Steve may not have heard for a long time. (Jazz crowds are much more reserved, after all.) But with his power and drive, Steve looked as though he had never *stopped* playing rock.

You couldn't get the smiles off of Deen's, Aynsley's, or Steve's faces the entire night, and everyone in the audience had an experience they will never forget. Neal Schon is talking about a special tour this coming summer, on which all of the original and current members would play old and new Journey songs. If that tour is anything like the House Of Blues concert, all drummers will want to attend. More information on the drummers mentioned in this story can be found on their Web sites: www.aynsleydunbar.com, www.deencastronovo.com, and www.vitalinformation.com (for Steve Smith). Also see the "Amazing Journey Of Steve Smith" article on page 62 of this issue.

Alan Arnold

In Memoriam
Larry Bunker

Larry Bunker, a tasteful jazz drummer and veteran LA studio percussionist, died March 8 in Hollywood, as the result of a stroke. He was seventy-six.

Bunker was a Southern California native who taught himself to play several instruments besides the drums, including piano, vibes, and saxophone. Between 1946 and 1948 he played drums and piano in the post band during his stint in the army at central California's Fort Ord.

Shortly after Bunker's discharge, he hooked up with several noted West Coast musicians, including trombonist Howard Rumsey. Later, he performed with guitarist Barney Kessel, and with a string of stellar saxophonists that included Stan Getz, Art Pepper, and Gerry Mulligan. On a 1954 gig with Bobby Short, Larry was required to play congas as well as drums. This piqued his interest in Latin playing, which he honed further while touring with Peggy Lee. Larry also played with Maynard Ferguson and Bill Evans.

Larry's talents eventually took him out of the clubs and into the studios of Los Angeles. In 1952 he got his first studio experience playing jazz vibes for a Paramount movie soundtrack when Lionel Hampton was unavailable. This was followed by percussion work on numerous commercial jingles, and on such films as *Stalag 17*, *Heaven Can Wait*, *Close Encounters*, and *Jaws*. His TV credits include hit shows like *Mary Tyler Moore*, *Lou Grant*, *The Bionic Woman*, *Roots I* and *II*, and *Centennial*. His last film work can be heard on 2004's *The Incredibles*.

MD Giveaway Winners

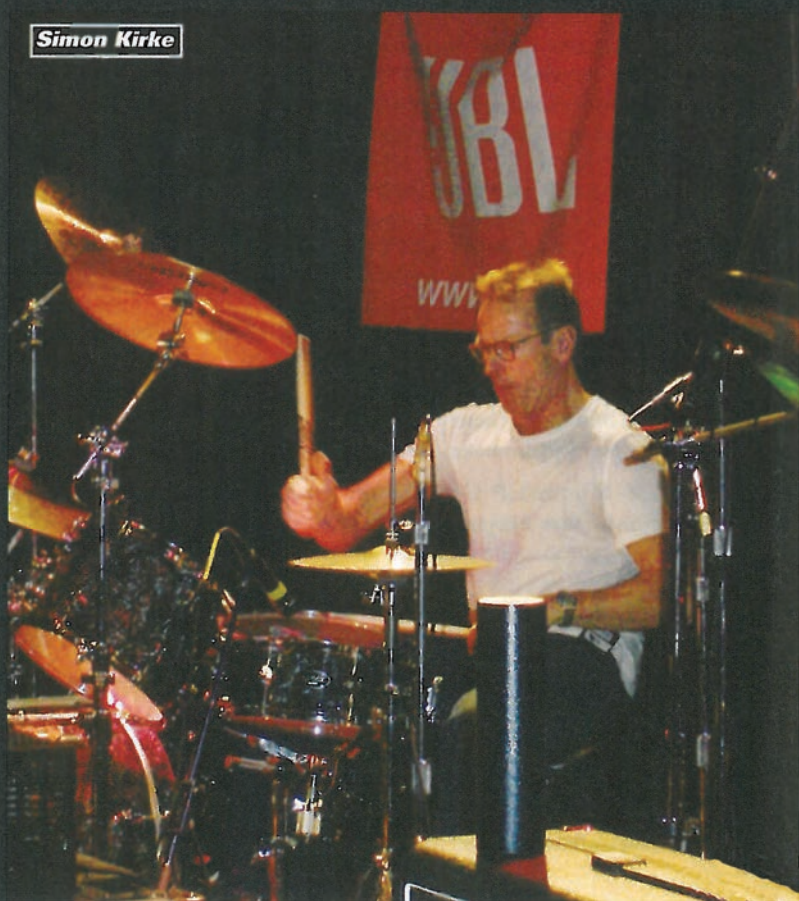
Modern Drummer is pleased to announce the winners in the Peace/Istanbul Agop *MD* Giveaway, which appeared in the October, November, and December 2004 issues. The Grand Prize winner of a Peace DNA Standard seven-piece kit, plus a Steel Soprano snare and a seven-piece set of Istanbul Agop Traditional cymbals, is **Patrick LeDonne** of Warren, New Jersey. **Zain Burgess** of North Vancouver, British Columbia won the second prize, a Peace DNA RavenPlate Series five-piece kit with an Istanbul Agop Alchemy Radical Technology cymbal pre-pak. Third prize, a 5½x14 Peace Batterie Series hand-hammered copper snare, went to **Pablo Rodriguez** of Houston, Texas.

Congratulations to the winners from *Modern Drummer*, Peace, and Istanbul Agop.

Rock & Roll Fantasy Camp '05

The fourth annual Rock & Roll Fantasy Camp was held in Los Angeles this past February 17–21. Campers got to interact with major rock stars, creating bands and performing in "concert" situations. Notable drummers attending the camp as guests included studio great **Jim Keltner** and Bad Company's **Simon Kirke**, while Night Ranger's **Kelly Keagy** served as a "camp counselor."

The event was produced by David Fishoff Productions and sponsored by JBL, *Wall Street Journal*, VH1 Classics, DW Drums, Zildjian, Pro-Mark, and *Modern Drummer*. For more information go to www.rockandrollfantasycamp.com.



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Lenni says, *"After I returned home, I bragged to all my friends and fellow drummers about winning. This award actually helped me get a couple of gigs. And I have Joe Stronsick to thank for this"*

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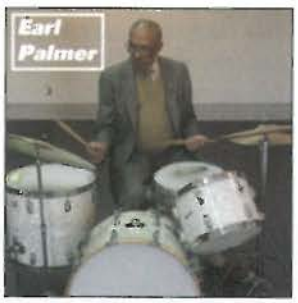
Indy Quickies

The **Gretsch Drum Company** is celebrating the 125th birthday of **Fred Gretsch Sr.**, who was born on February 10, 1880. Mr. Gretsch was just fifteen years old when he became president of The Fred Gretsch Manufacturing Company of Brooklyn, New York in 1895. By the time he died in 1952, his innovations had revolutionized the world of music.

In 1916 Fred Gretsch Sr. built a ten-story factory building that can still be seen from the Williamsburg Bridge when entering Brooklyn. In 1926, he introduced the practice of musical instrument importing and exporting when he trademarked the K. Zildjian cymbal brand in America. Also in the late '20s, he invented the warp-free ply drumshell, which changed the way drums were manufactured. And in 1946, he built the first-ever double bass drumset, for Louie Bellson. Fred Gretsch Sr.'s grandson, Fred Gretsch III, is president of the 122-year-old drum and guitar manufacturing company today.

Tama and **Pro-Mark** are supporting the 2005 Zippo Hot Tour competition for unsigned bands. Pro-Mark is supplying drumsticks, stick bags, cymbal cleaner, and other percussion accessories to the semi-finalists and finalists, and will be presenting the grand prize winner with a cymbal bag, a practice pad, brushes, and a year's supply of drumsticks with his or her autograph on them. Tama will present the grand prize winner with a five-piece drumkit with hardware and a full accessories package. The Hot Tour is a collaborative venture between Zippo and its promotion agency, FUSE. For more information, call FUSE at (323) 871-9900.

Studio legend and New Orleans native **Earl Palmer** recently presented a 1950s-era white marine pearl Rogers kit to the Louisiana State Museum. Earl used that kit on dozens of recording dates at the legendary J&M Recording Studio in New Orleans, and then took it with him when he moved to Los Angeles. The museum plans to use it in their Baton Rouge facility as part of a historic mock-up of the J&M Studio.



Who's Playing What

Chad Cromwell (Nashville studio) is a new Meinl drumset percussion artist.

Conga great **Jimmie Morales** is playing his own signature line of Remo congas.

Jessie Caraballo is playing Pearl drums on tour with Marc Anthony.

Vic Firth's artist roster now includes **Ralph MacDonald** (Jimmy Buffett), **Josh Eppard**

(Coheed And Cambria), **Tris Imboden** (Chicago), **Josh Fariss** (Earth Wind & Fire), **Terry Baker** (Kirk Franklin), **Rick Brothers** (Gretchen Wilson), **Darin James** (Stacey Mitchart), **Will Noon** (Straylight Run), **Kevin Frank** (Silvertide), **Mike Smith** (Suffocation), **Tony Laureano** (Dimmu Borgir), **Michael Lee** (Thin Lizzy), **Sam Fogarino** (Interpol), **Anthony "Tiny" Biuso** (T.S.O.L./The Dickies), **James Williams** (Gary Burton Band), **Ben Goies** (Twisted Method), **Shawn Drover** (Megadeth), **Swiss Chriss** (John Legend), **Aaron Spears** (Usher), and **Gas Lipstick** (Him).

New Factory Metal Percussion endorsers include **Jerry Marotta**, **Gary Novak**, **Guy Frometa**, **Brady Blade**, **Will Calhoun**, **Emil Richards**, **Steve DiStanislao**, **Kurt Rasmussen**, **Walfredo Reyes Jr.**, **Daniel de los Reyes**, and **Richie "Gajate" Garcia**. Factory Metal Percussion instruments are also being played by the **Blue Man Group** in the 20th Century Fox movie *Robots*.

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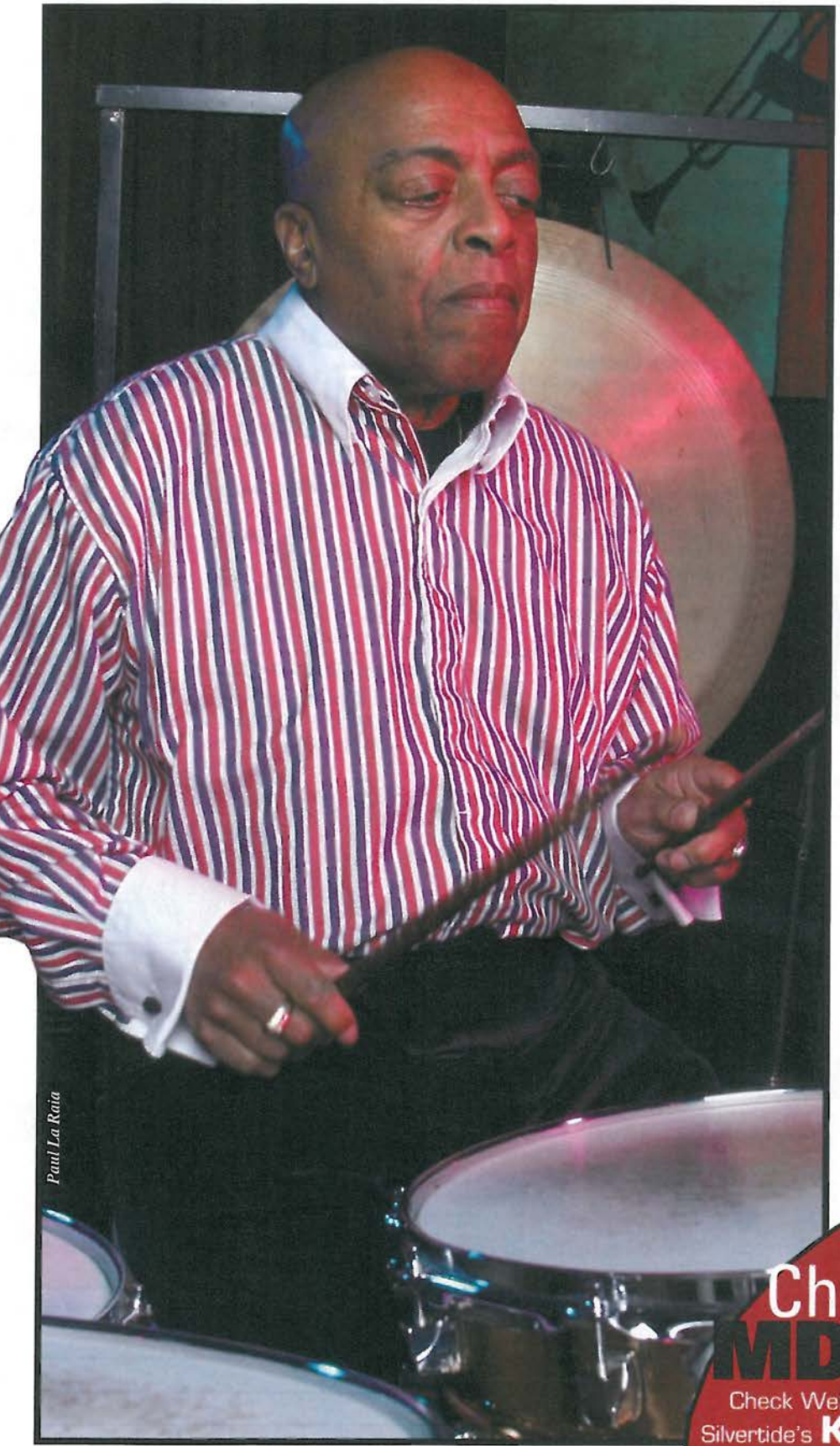
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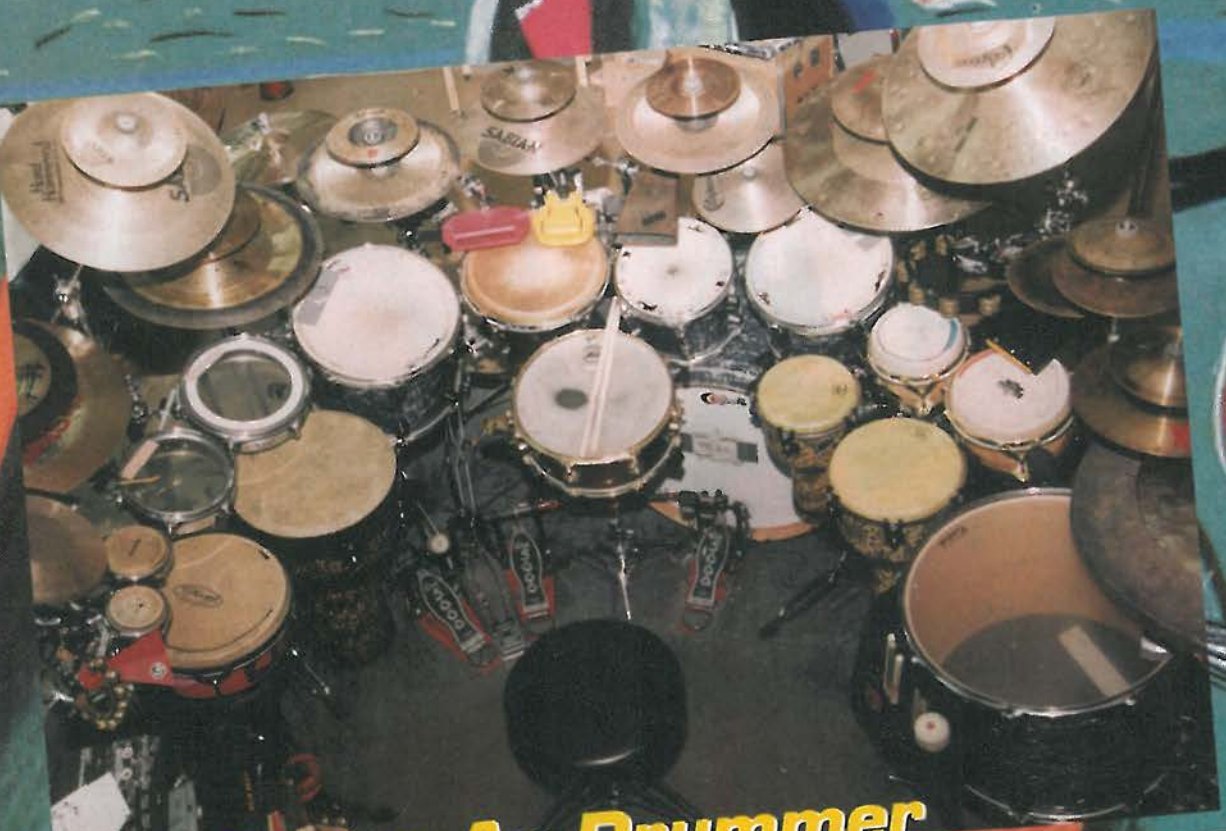
Oh, and who could forget that time the Radio City Rockettes showed up, high-kicking as a young woman played "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" from the back of a flatbed truck?



The Artist As Drummer

Edmond Demirdjian is a man of few words...but many drums. We received these two photos from Edmond, along with the following note:

"I am an artist and a drummer at the same time. I live in LA (USA) and in Bulgaria (Europe). I'm crazy about drums, and I play five to six hours every day. I play a few concerts of solo drums each year in Bulgaria.

"The drumkit in the pictures is in Bulgaria. I am also sending you my catalog of paintings. Best regards to my favorite magazine!"

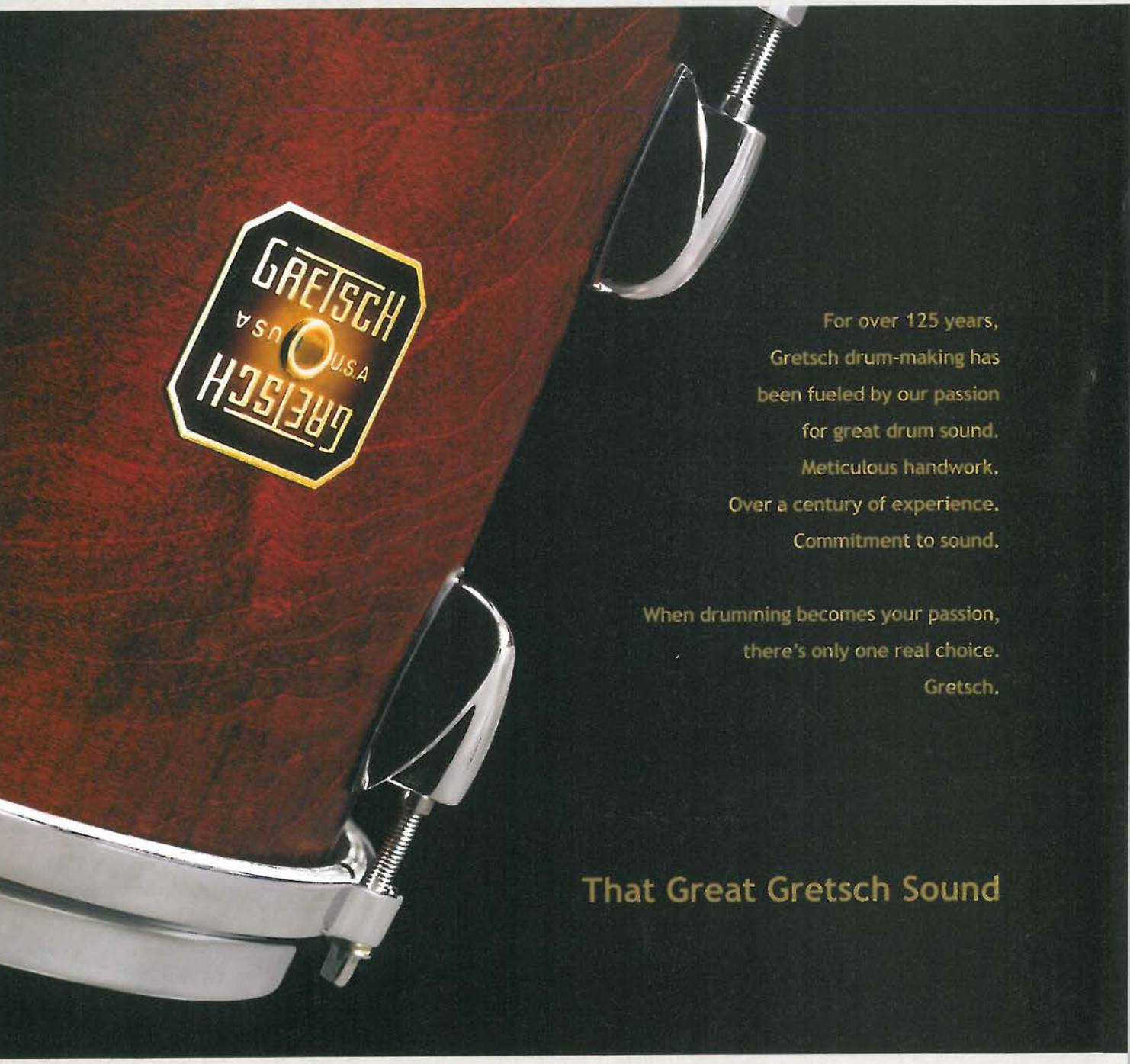
Although Edmond did not describe his kit in detail, the photo reveals a drumkit, a snare drum, and mini-toms by DW, several Remo Tombeks, Stagg and Remo djembes, LP bongos, blocks, bells, and tambourines, and Sabian, Bosphorus, and Paiste cymbals (among others). Quite a creative assembly.

We liked Edmond's paintings, too.

PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

1. Photos must be high-quality and in color. 35mm slides are preferred; color prints will be considered. Polaroids not accepted. 2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Only show drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. 5. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit. Send photo(s) to: Kit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned.

Passion. Not fashion.



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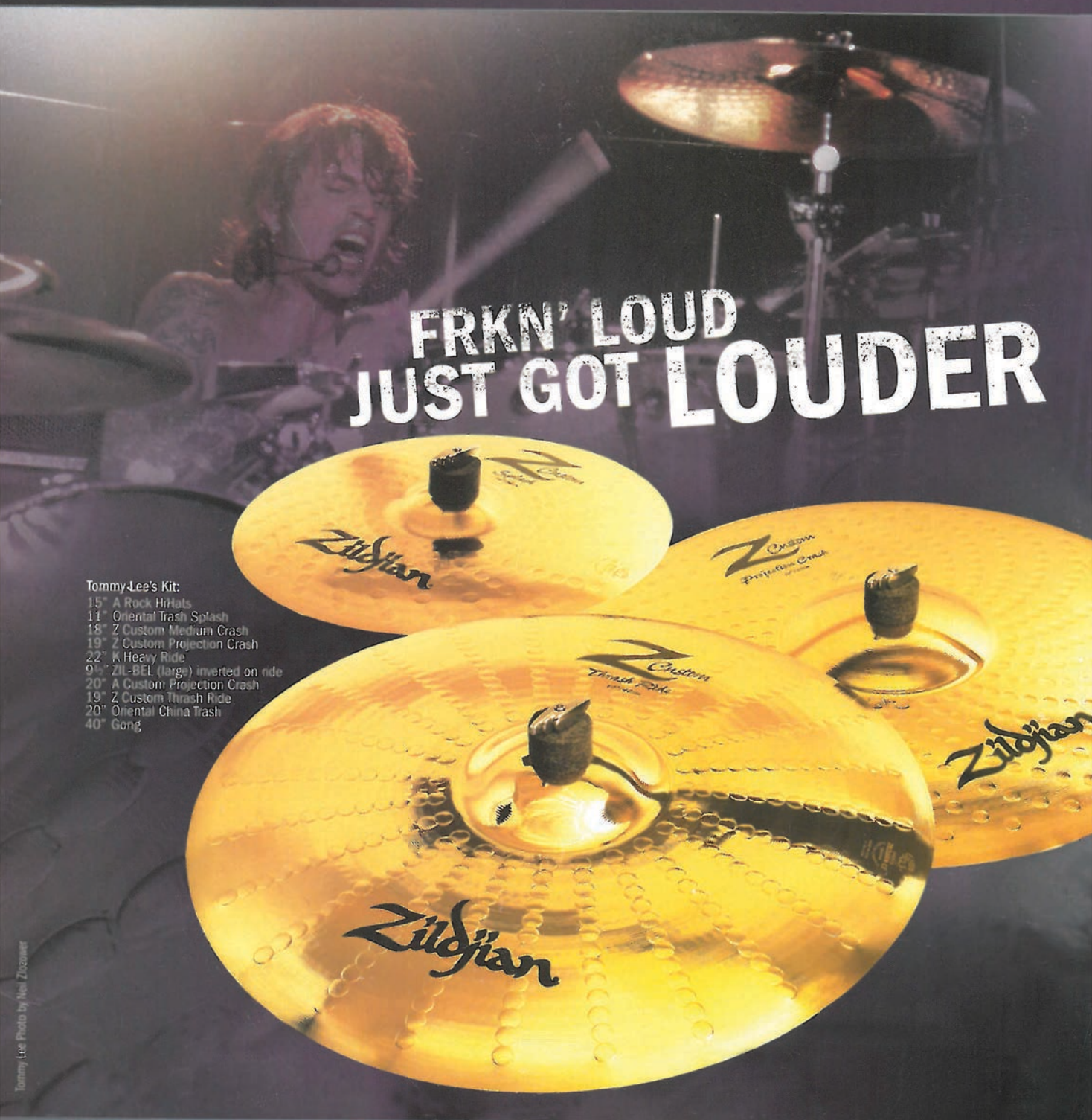

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